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Improving the effectiveness of the methods
of work of the First Committee

Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/59/50 and Corr. 1, 2 and 3.



I. Introduction

1. On 8 December 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/41, in which it requested the Secretary-General, within existing resources to seek the views of Member States on the issue of improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee and to prepare a report compiling and organizing the views of Member States on appropriate options. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and is based on information received from States.
2. In this connection, a note verbale dated 12 March 2004 was sent to States requesting their views. The replies received are reproduced in section II below. Any further replies received will be issued as addendums to the present report.

II. Replies received from States

A. Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[31 March 2004]

1. The issue of improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee should be considered in the wider context of the revitalization of the General Assembly and of the working group set up for the purpose.
2. In view of the new international situation, Member States must not bring the status quo into the disarmament and non-proliferation discussions.
3. As responsible participants in the international community, Member States must take a pragmatic approach that will enable them to meet new challenges.
4. The challenge of terrorism, as a new and real threat on the international scene, adds a new dimension to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.
5. The new international situation calls for effective multilateralism focusing on specific issues. It is therefore essential, in order to achieve international security, that existing international legal instruments be strictly observed and strengthened and that supplementary instruments be elaborated. The rule of law and transparency are without question the foundation of democratic practices at the international level.
6. In the context of the work of the Main Committees as a whole, the First Committee has been operating efficiently and meeting for just five weeks. It has also been acknowledged that the Committee has not made full use of the facilities and services available to it.
7. Argentina believes that the difficulties encountered by the First Committee are not so much a matter of methodological approach as of political approach, owing to the sensitive nature of the issues discussed. No methodology, no matter how carefully crafted, can replace political will.
8. Only through frank dialogue will it be possible to generate the necessary political will for reform or adjustment of institutions to the new circumstances.

9. The following changes in the Committee's methods of work could help to promote a climate conducive to dialogue:

I. Appointment of the officers of the Committee

10. The Chairman and the other officers of the Committee should be appointed a year in advance so that the necessary consultations may be held and the new officers can follow First Committee matters with the outgoing Chairman's support.

II. Length of sessions

11. The First Committee should continue to meet for five weeks, since many delegations must also cover the work of other Main Committees.

12. Too great a reduction in the schedule of meetings could be prejudicial to dialogue and the right of all delegations to follow the Committee's work.

III. Organization of work

13. One meeting should be set aside for organization of work, since the Chairman, with the help of the other officers of the Committee, will have held the necessary consultations before the Committee meets.

14. Five meetings should be set aside for the general debate, on the assumption that each Member State may speak for a maximum of five minutes and that copies of the full statement can be circulated.

15. Furthermore, rule 110 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly should be applied; the rule provides that "congratulations to the officers of a Main Committee shall not be expressed except by the Chairman of the previous session — or, in his absence, by a member of his delegation — after all the officers of the Committee have been elected".

16. Twelve meetings should be set aside for the structured debate, and the current method of clustering items should be restructured as follows:

(a) Cluster 1, on weapons of mass destruction, would contain old cluster 1, on nuclear weapons, and 2, on other weapons of mass destruction;

(b) Cluster 2, on conventional weapons, would be the same as old cluster 4;

(c) Cluster 3, on international security and other related matters of disarmament and international security, would cover old cluster 3, on outer space (disarmament aspects); cluster 5, on regional disarmament and security; cluster 6, on confidence-building measures, including transparency in armaments; cluster 9, on matters relating to disarmament and international security; and cluster 10, on international security;

(d) Cluster 4, on other disarmament measures, would be the same as old cluster 8;

(e) Cluster 5, on disarmament machinery, would be the same as old cluster 7.

17. Three meetings should be set aside for each of clusters 1, 2 and 3, and two meetings should be set aside for cluster 4 and one meeting for cluster 5.

18. In addition to the introduction of draft resolutions, the structured debate could be used for follow-up of the implementation of the resolutions adopted in previous years, and for hearing statements by the Secretariat on subjects on which reports have been requested from the Secretary-General, and by the directors of the regional centres for disarmament.

19. A statement could also be made by the President of the Conference on Disarmament in office during the period prior to the current session of the General Assembly, as well as by, for example the chairmen of meetings held in the period in question, the Chairman of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, the Chairmen of the groups of governmental experts, and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

20. Lastly, upon completion of consideration of each cluster, the Chairman of the First Committee could make a general statement to the press that would help to show the public at large the work done by the Committee.

21. The decision-making process should be completed in seven meetings, no general statements would be made at the beginning of the decision-making process on each cluster, and explanations of vote before or after a decision would be limited to a maximum of three minutes.

IV. Agenda

22. This is probably the trickiest question of all, owing to the variety of reasons for which a Member State submits a draft resolution.

23. There can therefore be no requirement that items be eliminated simply on the basis of how long they have been on the agenda, or because they have been repeated year after year and adopted by consensus.

24. Thus strengthened, the structured debate would ensure that the views and security needs of each Member State are made known and that texts more in keeping with the situations to be dealt with are elaborated.

25. The First Committee should endeavour to take a goal-oriented approach, not an agenda-oriented one. As the goals set in the resolutions adopted are attained, the corresponding items should be removed from the agenda, and others should simultaneously be added, in a spontaneous, natural process.

26. The biennialization or triennialization of resolutions should be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, if a group of governmental experts is set up, no resolution should be drafted until the group has completed consideration of the item. The proposed statements by the relevant working-group chairman in the course of the structured debate would permit follow-up of the item by the First Committee, without it being necessary to adopt a resolution that cannot contribute anything new for the time being.

27. Furthermore, the principal sponsors of draft resolutions on one and the same topic could hold consultations to determine whether it would be possible to elaborate a single text. For example, there could be a single resolution on regional centres for disarmament, with specific chapters on each centre focusing on the work carried out by each centre since the last session of the General Assembly, and giving the centres guidance as to the work to be carried out in the forthcoming period. The proposal that the directors of the centres should present their work during the

structured debate would make them more visible, while at the same time requiring them to rise to the challenge of meeting Member States' expectations.

28. Moreover, the principal sponsors of a draft resolution should be encouraged, if they have not already done so, to set medium- and long-term objectives to streamline requests for reports from the Secretary-General. For example, if the establishment of a group of experts is to be requested within two years, a start should be made by asking the Secretary-General to request observations from Member States on the matter, which would thus have time to submit their observations prior to the establishment of the group. Once the working group in question has begun its work, the First Committee should refrain from taking any action on any draft resolution, while continuing to monitor the group's work closely in the structured debate. Such an approach would automatically reduce the number of reports.

V. Follow-up of resolutions adopted

29. Since the officers of the Committee would be appointed in advance, consideration could be given not only to preparing for the First Committee's work at the next General Assembly session, but also to making a contribution to the follow-up of resolutions adopted. For that purpose it would also be possible to look to the outgoing Chairman for assistance in ensuring a smooth transition.

30. In that connection, the principal sponsors of the resolutions adopted could hold informal meetings for the exchange of information and/or views, as well as seminars with the participation of members of civil society, with a view to enriching the discussion of the item in question.

31. Although such activities could be carried out during the entire period from one session to the next, the occasion of the substantive sessions of the Disarmament Commission would be an appropriate time.

32. A more ambitious alternative would be to include the item "Follow-up of the resolutions of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly" in the agenda of the Disarmament Commission, as a third permanent item, which would be useful in that it would complement the work of both bodies.

B. China

[Original: Chinese/English]

[28 June 2004]

1. The reform of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, an integral part of the United Nations, cannot deviate from and should be carried out in line with the reform of the United Nations as a whole.

2. By performing their respective functions and working cooperatively, the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission form an inherent working logic and constitute the basic framework of multilateral disarmament. The reform of the First Committee should be conducive to coordinating and strengthening the relationships among the above-mentioned three mechanisms.

3. The reform and readjustment of the First Committee should not change its basic nature as the most representative international forum on security and disarmament, nor undermine each Member State's right to express views on international security and disarmament issues.

4. It is reasonable to reduce the length of First Committee meetings, shorten the time of the general debate and allocate time for specific discussions on certain agenda items. At the same time, the focal points of meetings should be highlighted, sufficient time should be provided for discussion on topical issues, and the right of each party to express views on issues concerned on an equal footing should be guaranteed.

5. For the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of the First Committee, it is very necessary properly to compress and cluster some resolutions to make them more pertinent. Imposing upper limits on the number of resolutions is neither practical nor feasible. Moreover, doing so cannot be regarded as a democratic approach.

6. The First Committee should reflect the concerns of all countries. Therefore, limiting the scope of its agenda is not advisable. As to defining the main theme of the First Committee beforehand, for practical reasons, currently it is feasible to deal with different agenda items in different ways. Some agenda items could be addressed every two or three years.

7. With regard to the role of the Chairman, the idea of electing the Chairman and Bureau in advance with a view to enhancing coordination deserves consideration.

C. Cuba

[Original: Spanish]

[21 May 2004]

1. Cuba supports the position stated on this topic by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

2. The role of the First Committee, as part of the multilateral disarmament machinery, is of great importance at a time when military expenditure is increasing in the world, chiefly as a result of the staggering increase in the one superpower's military spending, nuclear weapons are continuing to be developed and being given a greater role in the security doctrines of a number of States, and attempts are being made to impose unacceptable pre-emptive war approaches, which are clearly in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of international law.

3. Proposals to improve the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee cannot be implemented in isolation from the process of revitalizing the General Assembly and reforming the United Nations as a whole, including the Security Council.

4. Matters relating to the methods of work of the First Committee must therefore be considered in the overall context of the open-ended consultations on the revitalization of the General Assembly that are being held at the plenary level, under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly, on the basis of resolution 58/126, adopted on 19 December 2003.

5. Cuba believes that it is necessary to embark on a comprehensive reform process covering substantive issues relating to multilateral disarmament machinery, including the implementation of the resolutions and decisions of the First Committee, the resumption of substantive work by the Conference on Disarmament and the revitalization of the Disarmament Commission.
6. The reform of the United Nations, including the work of its Main Committees, as in the case of the First Committee, should be approached with care and in a balanced fashion, since it is a process with major implications for all Member States.
7. Cuba believes that the chief difficulties confronting the First Committee are not attributable primarily to the effectiveness or otherwise of its methods of work but, rather, to political considerations, particularly the lack of political will shown by some States to move forward with respect to matters of key importance for international peace and security, such as the issue of nuclear disarmament.
8. As long as some States continue to show no real political will, no change in the Committee's methods of work will result in progress on the items in question.
9. Action with a view to changing the First Committee's method of work is not new. The Committee has undergone major change in the past, with a view to improving its effectiveness as much as possible. One result of the earlier processes was that the Committee's session was reduced to just five weeks.
10. Although the First Committee considers items of great importance and adopts the most resolutions and decisions each year, it is the Committee that meets for the shortest period of time.
11. In Cuba's view, further reducing the length of time for which the First Committee meets would seriously reduce its effectiveness. It would be unacceptable for it to meet for less than five weeks.
12. Consideration of some resolutions on a biennial or triennial basis could be a viable option, and has in fact shown itself to be a viable option, in particular cases. However, ultimately it is the sponsors of each resolution who should determine the periodicity that they consider most appropriate for consideration of their draft. It would be unacceptable to assign a particular periodicity to a resolution or decision without the prior consent of its sponsor or sponsors.
13. Cuba believes that a flexible approach could be taken with respect to periodicity. A resolution that has been considered on an annual basis could, following a decision by its sponsors, be considered as circumstances dictate or for an indefinite period, with a periodicity of 2, 3 or more years. The opposite could also apply. A resolution that may have been considered on a biennial or triennial basis could be considered annually, if its sponsors considered it desirable.
14. Cuba is not in favour of the proposal that items under which no resolutions have been submitted for a given number of years, such as, for example, 2, 3 or 4 years, should be removed from the Committee's programme of work. Whether or not resolutions are submitted under a particular item is determined by various factors, many of them resulting from particular circumstances and they are not necessarily attributable to how relevant the item is.

15. The process of deciding whether or not a given item or items should remain on the Committee's agenda can thus not be directly determined by whether or not resolutions have been submitted under a given item during a particular period of time. Committees' programmes of work must appropriately reflect the interests of all States and not just those of some States.
16. Furthermore, Cuba does not support the proposal that the number of draft resolutions and decisions submitted each year should be limited. Any numerical limit set will be artificial and will infringe the right of any State to submit any drafts it considers necessary in the context of the General Assembly. In addition, setting such a limit would also constitute a violation of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.
17. In recent years, there has been a growing tendency in the First Committee to set up expert groups to prepare studies on various extremely important issues relating to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.
18. Much of the work carried out by such expert groups has been useful. At the same time, because of its small size, no expert group can be sufficiently representative of the United Nations membership at large.
19. It is therefore essential that once an expert group has submitted its report, all Member States should have the necessary time to consider the report properly and prepare their comments on it. It is then necessary to embark on substantive discussion of the experts' report and recommendations, with the participation of interested States. In the light of the outcome of that process, it will be decided what action should be taken.
20. Expert groups can in no way play the role of Member States.
21. The amount of time that delegations currently have from the conclusion of the First Committee's general debate to the deadline for submitting draft resolutions is insufficient. This means that often, while the general debate and discussion of individual items are taking place, outside the conference room important consultation and negotiation processes on particular draft resolutions are taking place.
22. In addition to having a negative impact on small delegations, this state of affairs detracts from the general debate, which is meant to be an extremely important political aspect of the Committee's work.
23. The amount of time set aside for real negotiations on draft resolutions is not adequate either. Cuba is in favour of setting aside more time for holding informal consultations, in which all interested delegations may participate, on draft resolutions already submitted or yet to be submitted. This is particularly important in the case of texts incorporating major substantive changes compared with the previous year and new texts.
24. The officers of the Committee should be appointed soon enough before the Committee begins its work to allow them to prepare appropriately for the forthcoming session; to hold informal consultations with delegations on what their main expectations are for the forthcoming session; to hear delegations' views on how resolutions adopted the previous year have been implemented; and to ensure, by means of coordination with the Secretariat, that all the necessary documentation will be ready on time.

25. Lastly, Cuba believes that one of the most serious problems relating to the work of the General Assembly as a whole, including the First Committee, is the lack of appropriate machinery for following up on the implementation of the resolutions and decisions adopted.

26. In the First Committee, as in many other committees, many resolutions are not implemented and there is not even a frank and transparent exchange of views among Member States on the reasons for that state of affairs. This has a direct negative impact on the credibility of the General Assembly as a whole.

27. Cuba therefore believes that at each General Assembly session the First Committee should set aside time for an active exchange among delegations on progress made in the implementation of the resolutions and decisions adopted at the previous session.

28. Cuba will continue to make an active contribution, with its views and proposals, to the ongoing discussion of United Nations reform, including consideration of the First Committee's methods of work.

29. Cuba is in favour of improving as much as possible the methods of work of all United Nations bodies, including the First Committee, provided that that process is not to the detriment of the right of all Member States to promote and defend their legitimate interests and that it does not have a negative impact on the key role played by the General Assembly within the United Nations but, rather, strengthens that role.

D. Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

[30 June 2004]

1. The subject of the reform of the United Nations has acquired great prominence in recent years, with a general sense of the need to strengthen multilateralism as the most appropriate means of addressing the challenges facing the international community as a whole. In his address in the general debate, President Vicente Fox voiced the full support of Mexico for the reform efforts to address both the new challenges and unfinished business.

2. Mexico also supports the exercise of revitalizing the General Assembly which is currently being overseen by its President on the basis of resolution 58/126 which includes an appeal to the Committees to review their methods of work, and therefore to apply resolution 58/41 on improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee.

3. As a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, the First Committee in accordance with Articles 11, paragraph 1, and 13, paragraph 1 (a) of the Charter "may consider the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments [...]", as well as initiating studies and making recommendations for "promoting international cooperation in the political field and encouraging the progressive development of international law and its codification". Those provisions underline the importance of the mandate of the First Committee on "disarmament and international security" as well as the high expectations of the

international community with respect to the substantive contribution of that body in those areas.

4. In this framework, the efforts to review the methods of work of the First Committee must be regarded as a first stage in a "comprehensive" process which includes all the international disarmament machinery established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, particularly in the light of the new international context.

5. That process must be attended by a greater political commitment to the achievement of concrete progress in the agenda for international disarmament and security. In that context, it is highly important to bear in mind the initiative of convening a fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament,¹ as well as the proposal to convene a United Nations conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers in the context of nuclear disarmament.

6. The reform of the work of the First Committee must take into account the earlier review efforts, both in order to ensure the continuity of action that has enabled it to make progress and to take cognizance of and overcome the obstacles it is currently facing.

7. With regard to more specific aspects of this matter, Mexico supports:

- The right of every country to adopt a position on matters of interest to it, without excluding the possible identification and discussion of a subject or topic of particular importance.
- The holding of interactive discussions, within the limits of the available time and space, provided that does not jeopardize the timetable assigned to the First Committee and does not interfere with the Committee's formal meetings. The pattern of such discussions, in terms of their format and programme, should be consistent with the overall interest of delegations. Consideration should be given to the possibility of inviting specialists.
- The development of an agenda which would include traditional matters related to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, and new subjects in those areas. Any grouping or regrouping of the items of the agenda of the First Committee should not necessitate mergers of draft resolutions on the same subject, known as "omnibus resolutions", which dilute the content of the draft resolutions submitted by Member States in accordance with their legitimate interests.
- Encouraging Member States, on a voluntary basis, to biennialize or triennialize the submission of their draft resolutions in order to avoid any mechanical consideration of them, but without any implied classification of them as secondary or of lesser importance.
- With regard to the question of the periodic consideration of the extent of compliance with resolutions adopted by the Committee and the consideration of additional measures to ensure that they are implemented, it is necessary to point out the need to define the purpose of such consideration, as well as the

¹ The question of the objectives and agenda of a fourth extraordinary session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was considered in the framework of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and incorporated in its reports for 1999.

related machinery and criteria, bearing in mind that, currently, at each session of the General Assembly, the First Committee, through its own resolutions, largely considers the progress made on the issue being addressed.

- Promoting the institutionalization of the participation of civil society in the work of the First Committee in order to acknowledge and encourage its contributions, also exploring the possibility of formalizing a scheme for the participation of non-governmental organizations, similar to that of the Third Committee (social and humanitarian matters).

E. New Zealand

[Original: English]
[29 June 2004]

New Zealand would like to offer the following suggestions for First Committee reform in response to that request.

- Consideration should be given to shortening the time allotted to the Committee. New Zealand considers that four weeks should be sufficient time to enable the Committee to complete its work. The Committee could consider utilizing both morning and afternoon sessions. Even if that is not feasible, the following reforms, together with good time-keeping, should enable the time currently allotted to the Committee to be reduced.
- New Zealand supports shortening the time allowed for general debate from two weeks to one, to allow more time for specific debate.
- New Zealand would like to see greater incorporation of external expertise into the Committee's deliberations. In this context, New Zealand would support Ambassador Sareva of Finland's proposal of interactive debate sessions, incorporating leading experts from academia and civil society. These discussions, which New Zealand agrees would appropriately span over two to three days, could address current key issues, providing focus and context for the Committee's work.
- Debate should be conducted on the basis of a rolling speakers' list. Once the speakers' list for each topic has been exhausted, debate should roll over into the next topic, making maximum use of the time available.
- An enforced time limit should be considered for all statements. If countries are aligned with a regional or group statement, national statements should be shortened or forsaken accordingly.
- Delegations should be encouraged to re-examine the value of long-standing resolutions with an eye to the merit of recycling texts with little or no alteration from year to year. If countries feel that such resolutions contain key positions which are still relevant, they should consider submitting the resolutions on a biennial or triennial basis.

F. Norway

[Original: English]

[30 June 2004]

1. Norway attaches great importance to General Assembly resolution 58/41 on improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee. Prior to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Norway circulated a non-paper suggesting concrete steps to be taken in order to enhance the relevance of the First Committee.
2. Norway organized an informal workshop in Oslo on 8 and 9 December 2003 to explore ways to revitalize the First Committee and make it more relevant. The workshop was intended to be a constructive contribution to the debate on strengthening the General Assembly. The workshop also provided an opportunity for informal exchanges of views on the situation in the Conference on Disarmament as well as the United Nations Disarmament Commission. There were participants from 19 countries from all regions, including the Chairman of the First Committee of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Ambassador Jarmo Sareva.
3. The discussions at the informal Oslo workshop were open and constructive. While the participants had different perspectives on a number of issues, they all expressed a strong commitment to multilateralism and the need to further improve the functioning of the First Committee.
4. The convener of the workshop observed a convergence of views among the participants that there must be a balance between existing and new challenges to global security in the agenda of the First Committee. Reforms must serve the purpose of strengthening global security. They are not ends in themselves. The reform process must be open and transparent and conducted in a constructive and inclusive manner. It was felt that one should proceed in a gradual, realistic and pragmatic way. One should therefore make a distinction between procedural and substantive changes.
5. Certain possible procedural changes were identified, such as learning from other best practices of the United Nations system, a rolling speakers' list for the general debate in the First Committee, a shorter and more focused general debate, early selection of the Chair and Bureau of the First Committee, consideration of a "troika system", thematic clustering of the agenda of the First Committee, biannualization and triannualization of resolutions on a voluntary basis and more consultations, with a view to merging resolutions that concern the same topic.
6. At the same time, it was felt that more discussion was needed on questions such as the duration of the First Committee; how much effort should be put into reaching consensus resolutions; whether certain issues be accorded priority; the role of the United Nations Secretariat in the follow-up of the resolutions; the role of the civil society in the deliberations of the First Committee; and the need for interactive debates and the need for sunset provisions.
7. The Norwegian conveners produced summaries from the Oslo workshop, which have been circulated in New York and in Geneva. These summaries reflect only the conveners' observations and should not be regarded as negotiated documents.

8. Norway has taken an active part in the informal deliberations in New York and Geneva chaired by Ambassador Sareva. Norway has on these occasions expressed support for Ambassador Sareva's non-paper on measures to improve the First Committee's working methods.

9. Norway supports the adoption of the recommendations contained in Ambassador Sareva's non-paper. At the same time, Norway underlines that improving the functioning of the First Committee must be an ongoing process. At the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the First Committee should therefore devote time for further consultations on ways and means to make the Committee more relevant to better meet existing and new security challenges. Improvements of the functioning of the First Committee should be seen as a contribution to the overall efforts to revitalize the General Assembly. At the same time, a more relevant First Committee should have a positive spin-off for multilateral disarmament mechanisms, such as the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the various multilateral treaties.

10. While supporting Ambassador Sareva's proposals, Norway reiterates its position on the following matters:

- The general debate in the First Committee should be more focused and function as a true "higher-level" segment. There should be limited speaking time and member countries should, when necessary, be asked to circulate a longer written version of their statements. The Secretary-General or the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs should introduce the main topics at each session of the Committee. His introduction should be circulated in advance so that delegates are better prepared for the discussion.
- The format of the thematic debates should be improved. Member countries should be encouraged to circulate thematic discussion papers as a basis for interactive discussions. Another option is to task the United Nations Disarmament Commission to prepare thematic papers. Relevant disarmament experts from civil society and academia could also be invited to make introductions and take part in the thematic deliberations. Non-governmental organizations should also be allowed to participate in these discussions.
- The number of resolutions considered by the First Committee should be reduced. In this respect, Norway favours more use of biennial and triennial submissions of resolutions. There should also be more consultations among member countries to merge resolutions that cover the same topic.
- Norway also favours more use of the instruments of decisions instead of resolutions. Administrative resolutions taken by the Committee could be clustered into one general set of conclusions.
- Norway favours an overhaul of the agenda of the First Committee to better reflect the thematic content of the Committee. The agenda should cover both existing and new security threats.
- Norway welcomes the decision to select the Bureau of the First Committee three months in advance of the session. This will allow for better preparation. At the same time one should consider additional steps for improved continuity, for instance by making one of the Vice-Presidents according to geographic rotation the President in the following Bureau.

G. Sierra Leone

[Original: English]
[30 June 2004]

1. In its resolution 58/41, the General Assembly noted that the improvement of the methods of work of the First Committee would complement and facilitate the broader effort to revitalize the General Assembly. While sharing that view, Sierra Leone believes that the ongoing process of implementing resolution 58/126 on the revitalization of the General Assembly has provided some viable recommendations which the First Committee should seriously consider in its effort to improve its methods of work. These recommendations are consistent with elements contained in the non-paper that the Sierra Leone delegation circulated in the First Committee during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

2. Sierra Leone is of the view that the Committee should, first and foremost, focus attention on those measures (a) that would not require changes in the rules of procedure and (b) that could be implemented without reference to the General Assembly in the form of draft resolutions to that effect. These measures could be summarized as follows:

Time management

3. The programme of work and timetable of each session of the Committee should be adjusted to ensure more efficient time management. This matter is within the purview of the Committee and its Bureau and need not require action or approval by the General Assembly. Specifically, the objective is to ensure that more time is allocated to in-depth thematic and interactive discussions on all aspects of disarmament and international security on the Committee's agenda.

4. It has been suggested, for instance, that all Main Committees could adopt or expand, as appropriate, interactive debates and panels, so as to enhance discussions and bring together experts from various fields.

5. For its part, the First Committee should make greater use of the expertise and resources of relevant non-governmental institutions and organizations that have made and continue to make invaluable contributions in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Informal sessions of the Committee could be convened for this purpose. In other words, the Committee could devote a limited number of sessions at the end of the general debate and before the formal thematic discussions and introduction of draft resolutions. Other participants in the informal sessions could include representatives of intergovernmental disarmament machinery and regional disarmament centres. The idea of "question time" could be introduced in this segment of the Committee's work.

6. Another objective of time management is to give delegations (sponsors, co-sponsors and potential co-sponsors) a better opportunity to hold informal consultations on the respective draft resolutions. The practice of scheduling such consultations during the lunch hour is not in the interest of delegations, especially those whose permanent missions are at a distance from the United Nations premises.

7. Sierra Leone offers the following suggested programme of work and timetable:

Meeting for the organization of work	1 meeting
General debate on all disarmament items	8 meetings
Dedicated informal consultations on draft resolutions	2 days
Informal interactive discussions with disarmament and non-proliferation experts, and/or non-governmental organizations, and representatives of regional disarmament centres	2 meetings
Thematic discussions on items, as well as introduction and consideration of draft resolutions under various clusters on all disarmament and international security issues	9 meetings
Action on all draft resolutions	8 meetings

Length of resolutions

8. The issue of excessive length of many resolutions, not only of the First Committee but also of other Main Committees, is not new. Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee also requires immediate action to reduce the length of many of its resolutions. Sierra Leone wholeheartedly endorses the suggestion that resolutions and decisions should be more concise, focused and action-oriented, with preambular paragraphs kept to the minimum.

Reporting

9. The practice of requesting the Secretary-General to prepare reports on the views of Member States on issues on the Committee's agenda should be reviewed. The Committee can recommend the inclusion in the provisional agenda of subsequent sessions specific items without a parallel request for the Secretary-General to produce a new report on those items.

10. In this regard, Sierra Leone suggests that starting with the fifty-ninth session, the Committee should, on the basis of "best practices", inform the General Assembly on action and initiatives it has taken to improve the effectiveness of its methods of work. In other words, after discussing the views of Member States contained in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 1 of resolution 58/41, the Committee should merely recommend, in a short and precise draft resolution, that the Assembly take note of the measures that the Committee has taken in improving the effectiveness of its methods of work. It is assumed that similar drafts would emanate from the other Main Committees.

11. Closely linked with the current reporting practice is the issue of having the Committee consider some items on a biennial or triennial basis. Sierra Leone is of the view that, although the issue has political repercussions for many Member States, States should be encouraged to continue consultations on the criteria of

guidelines to be used in deciding on the agenda items that should be considered on a biennial or triennial basis.

H. Switzerland

[Original: French]

[30 June 2004]

1. Switzerland feels that there is a need to improve the effectiveness of the working methods of the First Committee. The primary aim of efforts towards that end should be to strengthen the role of the General Assembly with respect to disarmament and international security, as well as its capacity to respond more effectively to the current challenges in that area.
2. The proposals designed to improve the working methods of the First Committee should be placed in the current context of efforts to revitalize the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 58/126, irrespective of whether the proposals concern procedures, organization or the content of work.
3. The schedules of work of the various multilateral bodies concerned with disarmament, namely the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, must be coordinated in order to enhance complementarity and synergies between those bodies.
4. Switzerland considers that the First Committee must achieve greater political visibility and play more effectively its role as a forum for interactive dialogue on all disarmament issues. Possible measures in that area might be:
 - Reducing the duration of the general debate to a maximum of two or three days;
 - If possible, reducing the duration of the session of the Committee;
 - Stronger focus in the substantive debates on priority themes;
 - Introduction of question-and-answer sessions involving consultation with experts, varying depending on the subject matter.
5. Switzerland would also like to see an improvement in the opportunities for verifying the implementation of the decisions of the First Committee. Possible measures in that area might be:
 - The election of future Chairmen and Bureaux at the end of the main session;
 - Institutionalized collaboration between the elected and outgoing Chairmen and Bureaux;
 - The organization of informal meetings of the co-authors of resolutions;
 - The introduction of an agenda item entitled "Follow-up of First Committee resolutions".
6. Finally, Switzerland considers that the agenda should focus more closely on the most important subjects and that the number of reports should be reduced. Switzerland is in favour of the idea of the biennialization or triennialization of the subjects on the agenda and a merging of resolutions wherever possible (to be studied

on a case-by-case basis). Furthermore, it might be advisable for the Bureau, or even an "ad hoc working group", independently of the debate on the reform of the First Committee, to make proposals on the refocusing of the timetable.

I. European Union

[Original: English]

[25 June 2004]

1. The European Union welcomes the efforts to make the work of the First Committee more relevant and to make the most effective use of the time allotted. The European Union believes that the rationalization of the working methods of the First Committee would be of benefit to all members and, in this context, would like to express its broad agreement with the thrust of some of the practical steps to improve the work of the Committee outlined at the fifty-eighth session in the Chairman's non-paper, entitled "Measures to improve First Committee working methods". Having considered the measures contained in the non-paper, the European Union would like to make the following comments.

General debate

2. The European Union agrees with the view that the general debate should be shortened to one week. The general debate should be geared towards analysing the international situation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and should preferably not be a mere summary of national standpoints or national actions on the subjects which will be dealt with in the thematic debates. The European Union would like to suggest the limiting of speaking time and making greater use of the possibility to distribute the long versions of national statements as a means of achieving this goal, while not detracting from the substance of the general debate. Establishing the practice of a rolling list of statements would contribute to the goal of a more intensive general debate, while making best use of the time available.

New formats for discussion in the Committee

3. The European Union is in favour of increasing the interactivity of discussions. The inclusion of leading experts from academia and civil society may also benefit some discussions.

Thematic part

4. The Chairman's proposal to establish a list of rolling speakers is in line with the thinking of the European Union.

Agenda items

5. The European Union agrees with the Chairman on the issue of overhauling the agenda to reflect the thematic content of the work of the First Committee. The Chairman proposes reducing the agenda to ten cluster items which would be identical to the current thematic clusters. The European Union is convinced of the need to maintain, in the First Committee, a balanced agenda that reflects important goals and objectives and that is able to react to and focus upon today's most immediate problems. Such problems include the non-proliferation and disarmament

challenges facing the international treaties today, as well as the question of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Resolutions

6. The European Union favours the greater use of the biennial and triennial submission of resolutions, so as to reduce their number. The European Union is in favour of reconsidering the automatic inclusion of a paragraph at the end of resolutions asking for the re-inscription of the item on the agenda. The European Union also favours the more frequent use of decisions instead of resolutions. Decisions are easier to handled and less time-consuming. Limiting the reporting requirements so as to also reduce the workload of the Secretariat should also be explored. The elimination from the agenda of resolutions which do not have as their main focus the mandate of the First Committee would be desirable.

Chair and Bureau

7. The European Union welcomes the fact that the Chairs and Bureaux of the Main Committees, including the First Committee, will in future be elected three months in advance of the General Assembly session. However, the European Union would continue to favour exploring ways of having the Chair and Bureau of the Committee in place even earlier, so as to allow the opportunity for more thorough preparation of the work of the Committee, in consultation with the regional groups.

Fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly

Finally, the European Union is of the opinion that concrete recommendations in respect of improving the working methods of the First Committee should be made at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.



General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 July 2004

Original: English

Fifty-ninth session

Item 66 (k) of the provisional agenda*

**Improving the effectiveness of the methods
of work of the First Committee**

Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee

Report of the Secretary-General

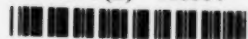
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* A/59/150.

** This information was received after submission of the main report.



II. Replies received from States

J. Bulgaria

[Original: English]
[2 July 2004]

1. We believe that the issue of reforming the working methods and practices of the First Committee should be addressed in the overall context of the revitalization of the General Assembly. General Assembly resolution 58/126 of 19 December 2003 provides a good framework and specific measures for the renewed efforts of the international community to enhance the authority and role of the Assembly and to improve its Main Committees' working methods. Against this background, the reorganization and modernization of the First Committee should be aimed at achieving greater efficiency and pragmatism as well as better focusing of its important activities.
2. Bulgaria co-sponsored resolution 58/41, entitled "Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work in the First Committee". We fully concur with and entirely share the views expressed in the European Union non-paper on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee. We very much appreciate the proposals put forward by the Chairman of the Committee as well as by several delegations during the informal consultations in the First Committee and in the follow-up discussions. The present reply is intended to make additional comments and to elaborate, from our national perspective, on the approaches and practical steps that have already been suggested.
3. We are convinced that the working methods of this as well as of other disarmament forums should be rationalized in a way to address properly the new security threats to international peace at the beginning of the new millennium. The agenda should better reflect the present global challenges and at the same time should maintain balance in meeting the long-standing objectives and goals of the international community in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is our view that all changes are to be made in a constructive and consistent manner, ensuring reinforcement and strengthening of the principles and objectives of the major multilateral instruments in this area.
4. We do not expect an easy solution to the problems experienced by the First Committee which are basically of a political nature. A favourable political environment, mutual trust and spirit of cooperation remain indispensable tools in pursuing common approaches to sensitive issues. At the same time, reorganizing the work of the Committee along the current priorities will help us to establish an infrastructure relevant to the dynamic political and security changes which can only further our goals in promoting international peace and stability.
5. Bulgaria believes that the following concrete measures could contribute to improve the working methods and practices of the First Committee:
 - A shorter session of the First Committee would be possible if the Committee were able to decide on a reduced and consolidated agenda as well as on practical steps to optimize its overall organization of work. We believe that the concept of reorganization should take into account the interests and resources of small and middle-sized delegations and their wish to make full use of the

debate and participate in as many meetings as they deem appropriate. With regard to all segments of the Committee's work, a balanced approach should be pursued with a view to achieving rationalization without hampering the possibilities of all to benefit from and contribute to the discussion.

- The general debate can be shortened to one week (10 sessions or less), with an established speaking time limit of 5 minutes per individual delegation, with a possible extension of up to 10 minutes in exceptional cases. It seems that this time limit may prove sufficient for a delegation to present its views in a concise and, at the same time, adequate manner and, if it so wishes, to distribute a longer version of its statement. There could be a time limit for coalitions and subregional groupings, set at 20 minutes.
- We do not object to the idea of having interactive discussions following the general debate for two to three days on specific topics, including panel presentations by leading disarmament experts and academic think tanks. At the beginning of each session, one or two topics of priority in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation can be proposed for in-depth consideration.
- The thematic debate should remain unchanged in terms of duration. As to organization, we should be able to allocate more time to a profound discussion of key resolutions through biennialization and triennialization or by turning into decisions those resolutions that do not contain new substantive elements or where there are no developments in the specific items under which they have been introduced. We could build upon the experience of the First Committee during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, during which a good example was set by several delegations on how we could handle this issue for the sake of efficiency and rationalization.
- As to the final part of the Committee's work, we see some merits and convenience in the proposal that Member States explain their positions in consolidated statements while the Committee is taking action on all draft resolutions. However, there are still important arguments for maintaining the existing practice. The explanation of vote before and after the vote as well as statements prior to action on the respective thematic cluster seem to have a distinctive place and function and represent the variety of tactical options available to Member States for outlining their positions during this key segment of our work.

K. Israel

[Original: English]

[6 July 2004]

1. The international effort to reduce and eliminate strategic threats to international and regional peace and security, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, has faced significant new and grave challenges this year.
2. Improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of the First Committee should provide the General Assembly with better means to address these challenges.

3. The First Committee would be more effective if the number of yearly resolutions were reduced significantly. We would prefer to "ease the burden" on the First Committee's agenda by avoiding the introduction of consensus resolutions on a yearly basis.
4. Israel also believes that the First Committee could best serve its objectives if the time were used for substantive discussions on the items high on the international security agenda. Therefore, we would support the idea of removing anachronistic resolutions that might have been suitable in their era but that today do not contribute to international security.
5. We welcome efforts by States to refresh and update the agenda of the First Committee in order to enhance its efficiency.

L. Canada

[Original: English]
[13 July 2004]

1. As a strong supporter of resolution 58/41, Canada welcomes this opportunity to provide views on practical measures to improve the effectiveness of the First Committee. It is our expectation that at least some of the results of this exercise can be put into practice as early as the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, particularly as this effort is entirely in line with broader Assembly directives delineated in resolution 58/316, entitled "Further measures for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", adopted by consensus on 1 July 2004.
2. In our view, the capacity of the First Committee to fulfil its primary role — namely, the universal forum for policy discussions across the range of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament — would be significantly enhanced by a shift in emphasis towards policy and thematic debate. In this regard, we welcome the proposals made in his non-paper by the Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. More specifically, we support a condensed, consolidated general debate, of one week's duration, with the Committee meeting both in the morning as well as the afternoon, and hope that a suitable staggering arrangement can be reached with the Fourth Committee to facilitate such a change. We would encourage the delivery of relatively concise oral statements, alongside the circulation of comprehensive written texts, with a view to improving coherence and facilitating more focused interaction.
3. We also strongly support the original proposal of the Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-eighth session for the inclusion of an expert panel segment on a key First Committee issue immediately following the general debate. In this connection, we are pleased to note that the General Assembly, in paragraph 3 (c) of the annex to its resolution 58/316, decided that the practice of interactive debates and panel discussions shall be utilized or expanded, as appropriate, by all Main Committees so as to enhance informal, in-depth discussions and to bring together experts from various fields. In fulfilment of this obligation, the incoming Chairman and Bureau of the First Committee during the fifty-ninth session should undertake early consultations, both to propose topical issues of broad interest where the involvement of civil society and other experts could benefit the Committee's work, as well as to initiate organizational planning.

4. For Canada, the thematic portion of the session should be recognized as the focal point of the First Committee's activity. Its current organization, based on the 10 thematic clusters or topics, is for the most part conducive to focused debate. However, we would support a consolidation or reordering of the clusters, an issue which may be worthy of more formal discussion at the fifty-ninth session.
5. Furthermore, in our view, this segment of the Committee's work should be broadened to include issues and practices beyond the customary introduction of resolutions before the Committee. To this end, interactive debate should be encouraged, with "question time" as one useful option in this regard. Delegations should also be encouraged to fully capitalize on the invaluable opportunities afforded by this universal forum, by raising issues and policy concerns of particular importance to them, explaining their views, putting forward new and concrete ideas and offering practical proposals.
6. To facilitate more focused debate further, the Chairman and secretariat should organize the speakers' list coherently, so that the introduction of resolutions and statements on thematic issues are not jumbled together, as was the case during the fifty-eighth session. Instead, those wishing to speak to a thematic issue should be grouped together in advance, with a view to fostering a more coherent discussion. A rolling speakers' list should similarly become a general practice of the Committee, the better to promote a flowing exchange of views.
7. The current First Committee agenda is a long, incomprehensible and often incomplete listing of resolutions. The organization of the First Committee's thematic (and action) portions along the lines of the clusters should, in our view, be replicated with regard to the Committee's agenda. A reorganization along the lines of the cluster themes would not inhibit any member from presenting a resolution, whether old or new. It would also be more easily understood by the general public. As such a modification would not represent a fundamental change and is, moreover, consistent with the current emphasis on General Assembly reform and revitalization and improved transparency, we urge that this approach be considered and implemented for the First Committee during the fifty-ninth session. The adoption of a provisional programme of work at the end of each session for the next session will help to plan more effectively.
8. This greater emphasis on policy dialogue should be complemented by less reliance on resolutions as the main measure of the Committee's productivity. The First Committee has traditionally adopted a large number of resolutions, many repetitive in content and voting pattern, with few, if any, substantive textual changes from year to year. In addition, in many cases, there is often little follow-up, impact or implementation. While not wishing to constrain the ability of any State to introduce any resolution on an issue of importance to it, we nevertheless believe that there are a number of steps that can be taken to remedy the deficiencies that are unfortunately too characteristic of current practices, with a view to rendering resolutions more effective and meaningful international policy tools, as well as more reflective of issues and resources.
9. First, the impact of a resolution should be carefully considered on an annual basis. Resolutions should be drafted to be as concise, focused and action-oriented as possible. In our view, greater discipline can and should be exercised. We encourage restraint in re-submitting resolutions, unless new developments so warrant. For example, a resolution establishing an expert group or calling for a study should not

be re-submitted until the report of the group or the study is completed, provided the resolution contains no other substantive elements.

10. For all resolutions, we urge that the customary final paragraph requesting re-inscription of the resolution the following year be deleted. This would by no means eliminate the ability to re-introduce the resolution should a sponsoring State deem the situation to warrant such renewed Committee action.

11. All resolutions should also be seriously considered for biennialization or triennialization. Clustering should be adopted, as decided by the Assembly in paragraph 3 (a) of the annex to its resolution 58/316. The amalgamation of resolutions on similar themes (e.g. United Nations regional peace and disarmament centres) would encourage greater attention to their policy role. Other candidate resolutions for similar such consolidation include those regarding existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and on small arms and light weapons. There may also be opportunities to retire some resolutions, such as those that have become essentially ritualistic. There should be a greater use of decisions, particularly for issues of an administrative nature, which could also be clustered together.

12. Requests to the Secretariat to conduct consultations or prepare a report should be carefully considered, particularly from the perspective of their anticipated value added. Also, when views are sought, Committee members should make an effort to reply substantively and on a timely basis, so as to make this exercise truly useful and reflective of the range of members' views.

13. We welcome the positive step that has already been taken, with the early nomination of the Chairman and election of the Bureau for the fifty-ninth session of the Committee and urge consultation between the outgoing and incoming Bureaux, in order to maintain the Committee's momentum towards improving its effectiveness and meet our obligations under resolution 58/316.

14. We are confident that this reform effort in the First Committee will have a positive impact upon its work; it may also encourage similarly constructive consideration in the other disarmament forums.



General Assembly

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7 July 2004

Original: English

Fifty-ninth session

Items 115 and 121 of the preliminary list*

Pattern of conferences

**Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of
the Office of Internal Oversight Services**

Report on the integration of global management of conference services

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, 54/244 of 23 December 1999, 57/292 of 20 December 2002 and 58/250 of 5 February 2004, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the General Assembly, the attached report, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, on the integration of global management of conference services.
2. The Secretary-General takes note of the observations made in the report and is pleased with the report's assessment.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.



Report on the integration of global management of conference services

Summary

In December 2001, the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/253, requested the Secretary-General to ensure that conference services are managed in an integrated manner throughout all duty stations in the Organization. Additionally, in its resolution 58/250, the Assembly notes that the reform [of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management] will include a comprehensive study of the integrated global management, in accordance with section II.B, paragraph 8, of resolution 57/283 B, in consultation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and with the full participation of all duty stations in a collaborative and consultative process, with a view to reaching conclusions that are both practical and comprehensive, and requests the Secretary-General to keep the Assembly informed of the matter through the Committee on Conferences.

In response to these resolutions, the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management requested OIOS to provide consulting services and to help identify ways of achieving better integration of the management of conference services at its four duty stations — New York (United Nations Headquarters), Geneva (United Nations Office at Geneva), Vienna (United Nations Office at Vienna) and Nairobi (United Nations Office at Nairobi) — as well as identifying possible impediments towards that end.

The first challenge faced by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management concerns the differences among official documents regarding the locus of authority in the Department for policy-making and conference management. Some documents provide that such authority resides centrally in New York, while according to others, it is decentralized. This inconsistency has led to inconclusive debates and to a situation where the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management is responsible to the Secretary-General for the budgets and expenditures of all four duty stations, while in practice having little authority over how these funds are spent.

The second challenge arises from the first. Because official documents do not present a consistent picture regarding conference management policy, inconsistent management practices have developed in a number of areas across all four duty stations. These areas include budgets and expenditures, staffing, workload standards, information technology, meeting planning, documentation management, outsourcing, examinations and test management. A patchwork of policies and practices has resulted. To address this assortment of policies and procedures, OIOS proposes an alternative approach to the extremes of centralized or decentralized management.

The OIOS consultancy included conducting a number of workshops at all four duty stations to elicit suggestions that would serve as the basis for the integrated approach as requested by the Department. The results of these workshops form the basis of the OIOS proposals to the Department which are presented throughout the present report. OIOS developed the collaborative model, which is expressed through the nine Task Forces, in concert with all four duty stations, during visits to all four and in conformity with the mandate set out by the General Assembly.

In the proposed OIOS model, policies and practices are developed collaboratively by nine Task Forces, each of which involve all four duty stations. The Task Forces would be based on the following themes: harmonization of statistical indicators; meeting planning; human resources; outsourcing; information technology; budget and finance; documentation and publishing; client orientation; and examinations. The work of the Task Forces would be coordinated by a Focal Point in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in New York. All duty stations would be represented on each Task Force, with the Task Force chairs distributed among all four duty stations.

Each Task Force would prepare a chapter in the Department's new Manual of Policies and Procedures, to be ratified by the participants in the Department's Coordination Meeting in 2005. Since all four duty stations will have collaborated in preparing the Manual and will thus "own" its provisions, greater consistency and integration, a stronger corporate identity and more rational work-sharing practices to avoid peaks and troughs are likely to result.

The report makes a number of other proposals to further the introduction of the global concept. Most fundamental is the need for an attitude, or perception, in the four duty stations that they are part of a global network and, as such, must adopt a cooperative, collaborative approach where the needs and contributions of all duty stations are automatically and systematically taken into account. Another key recommendation is that the appointment of the head of conference services in each duty station would be made by the local Director-General in close consultation with the Under-Secretary-General, to consolidate the spirit of collaboration.

All of the proposals included in the present report have either emerged directly from the duty stations or have been extensively discussed with them. The management of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has endorsed these proposals and has already taken action to implement many of them.

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I. Introduction

1. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management is responsible for managing conference services at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). In December 2001, the General Assembly, in its resolution 56/253, requested the Secretary-General to ensure that conference services are managed in an integrated manner throughout all duty stations in the Organization. In turn, the Department requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to provide consulting services and to assist it in identifying ways of achieving better integration of conference services management at its four duty stations. Specifically, OIOS was asked to identify:

- Any concerns and issues in the management of personnel, meetings, documents, budgetary and financial measures and information technology systems that have arisen as a result of the current structure of responsibilities and authority for conference servicing across duty stations
- Potential benefits, including but not limited to synergies, savings and improved timeliness of delivery in managing the aforementioned areas that might accrue from reconsidering the existing structure
- Possible impediments to achieving the potential benefits identified.

2. The OIOS consultancy employed questionnaires, interviews and document analyses. It also conducted a number of workshops at all four duty stations to elicit suggestions that would serve as the foundation of the integrated approach, as requested by the Department. The results of these workshops form the basis of the OIOS proposals to the Department which are presented throughout the present report.

II. Defining the challenge

3. Various United Nations documents convey different messages about where authority lies in the conference services network. For example, resolution 56/253 supports a centralized approach, under which Headquarters sets policies and procedures, as does resolution 56/242, by which the General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (the predecessor of the current Department for General Assembly and Conference Management) of the Secretariat is considered the appropriate executive authority to oversee, coordinate and enhance the global management and delivery of United Nations conference services (II.3).

4. Other documents, such as ST/SGB/2000/13 (sect. 7), call for dual reporting responsibilities, under which conference service operations in UNOG, UNOV and UNON report both to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in New York and to their local Directors-General, to the former for policy matters and to the latter for implementation of those policies.

5. As a result of these differences, the Under-Secretary-General in New York faces a major dilemma. While he is responsible for the budgets and the expenditures

in UNOG, UNON and UNOV relating to conference services, he has little control over how these Offices manage their finances.

6. There are also differences in the budgetary arrangements of the various duty stations. While 100 per cent of the Headquarters resources derive from the regular budget, in UNON this figure is only 50 per cent and in Vienna only 22 per cent. This has led to significant differences in the ways the duty stations operate, mainly because duty stations which need to generate their own revenue from clients provide different levels of service for their clients than do duty stations which have dedicated regular budget funding.

7. Under the current arrangements, there is little opportunity for harmonizing budgets across duty stations. Therefore, there is little incentive for Headquarters to discuss its budget submissions in detail with the other duty stations and such discussions do not occur. Similarly, there is limited feedback from Headquarters to the duty stations on their budget submissions. Budget formats and presentations vary widely. Moreover, uniform methods for charging for outsourced assistance have not been developed.

8. There are numerous other examples of inconsistencies among the four duty stations.¹ There has been, until recently, no uniform method for recovering costs when staff are loaned from one duty station to another; there was no clear system of staff exchanges to support conferences and major events; there is little coordination of outsourcing of translating and other services; there is room for improvement in the administration of examinations; there is little consistency in information technology capability and structure across duty stations; there was no centralized, uniform database accessible by all duty stations which shows meetings to be held and peaks and troughs in work across the year; there was no uniformity in the setting of page limits, waivers or the use of the slotting system; there is no uniformity in definitions, referencing, terminology, formatting or spelling across duty stations. Perhaps most importantly, there has not always been consistency in statistical indicators and workload standards for pages, page impressions, workdays, workyears, and assignment days.

9. OIOS found that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management staff at Headquarters, UNOG, UNON and UNOV recognized these inconsistencies, which they raised in the numerous meetings held by OIOS with them and with clients in all four duty stations.

III. Dealing with the challenge

A. Approach

10. To deal with these inconsistencies, OIOS proposes a third approach in which, instead of being set in either a centralized or decentralized way, policies and practices are developed collaboratively by all four duty stations.

11. A similar collaborative, or partnership, approach can be found in the private sector. In many global companies, partners in each country's firm collaborate to set the policies and procedures of the firm worldwide.

12. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has already taken a number of steps towards achieving such a collaborative approach. Since 2000, it has been holding a series of coordination meetings attended by all duty stations. It has also begun a number of joint activities, such as the Information and Communications Technology Board and the Task Force on Performance Measurement and Workload Standards (not one of the Task Forces proposed in the present report). All duty stations are represented in these bodies.

B. Towards a Cooperative Global Strategy

13. The present section contains an outline of what OIOS believes to be a realistic new global management strategy (the "Cooperative Global Strategy") for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. The strategy is founded on the concept of cooperation and is expressed in a number of measures the Department is recommended to take in this calendar year. These recommendations were presented to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management at the conclusion of the consultancy and were adopted by the Department. A Focal Point was appointed in New York and task forces were launched. Task force reports must be submitted prior to the July coordination meeting. In addition, a number of other recommendations relating to improved coordination and communication have been implemented by the Department.

14. The features of the Department's Cooperative Global Strategy are:

- Moving to a mutually consultative and cooperative culture in which the views and contributions of all duty stations are valued and systematically sought and where information is freely shared
- Nominating a Focal Point within the office of the Under-Secretary-General to "drive" the cooperative global strategy and act as a bridge between Headquarters and the other duty stations
- Establishing a series of broad-based cross-duty station Task Forces (in conjunction with discipline-based Working Groups) to recommend practical and realistic policies and procedures to further the integration of global management throughout the Secretariat
- Considering and adopting those recommended policies and procedures at the next two Department Coordination Meetings
- Encouraging participation by the Directors-General from all duty stations and/or their representatives in the Coordination Meetings
- Requesting the approval by the Coordination Meetings of a fixed text, arising from the recommendations, which will be submitted to the Under-Secretary-General for final authorization
- Using the fixed text as the nucleus of a new Manual of Departmental Policies and Procedures
- Providing additional resources for the Department Executive Office to enable it to monitor budgets and expenditure reports

- Implementing a series of staff exchanges across duty stations, within a defined policy and operational framework, with additional resources to be secured from extrabudgetary sources, if possible
- Issuing a circular by the Under-Secretary-General to all conference servicing staff in the four duty stations, affirming the establishment of an explicit strategy to support and further the integration of global management (the "Cooperative Global Strategy")
- Requesting the Under-Secretary-General to approve the budget for each duty station
- Considering the harmonization of the structures of all duty stations, if necessary, in consultation with the Department of Management
- Considering changing the names of units to enhance consistency across all duty stations
- Commissioning a study of the capacity of each duty station to carry out its required duties
- Considering, in consultation with the Department of Management, measures to standardize the budgetary sources of all duty stations, principally to bring UNON in line with the other duty stations by considerably increasing the proportion of its budget that it receives from the regular budget, in order to reduce the burden it faces of having to generate income in competition with lower-priced rivals
- Retaining the existing reporting lines of heads of Conference Services to their local Directors-General
- Enhancing the close consultation between the local Directors-General and the Under-Secretary-General on the selection of the head of conference services in each duty station
- Building-in compliance with the Manual's provisions by requiring staff to report on progress towards achieving the cooperation goals
- Considering changing the appropriate Secretary-General's Bulletins to incorporate proposals contained in the present section relevant to budget, personnel, structure and nomenclature.

C. Task Forces

15. OIOS recommended that the Task Forces be organized as part of a comprehensive global management strategy to be implemented by the Department. The lesson learned from the 2003 Coordination Meeting was that a Focal Point needed to be appointed to "drive" the entire integration strategy forward and, as part of that function, to coordinate the work of the Task Forces. OIOS accordingly included the idea of the Focal Point in the proposed global management strategy, which was accepted and implemented by the Department.

16. At one of the workshops conducted by OIOS in Nairobi in November 2003, the Task Force idea was developed further. The workshop participants decided to break the components of global management into five areas, which included policies,

priorities and reports. They also developed a "spectrum of sharing of authority" across all four duty stations. The spectrum ranged from one extreme, where Headquarters makes all the decisions, to the other extreme, where each of the duty stations assumes all of the responsibility for the development of policies and procedures for that duty station. The same approach was used at UNOG and UNOV and validated at a workshop in New York.

17. The main message of these exercises and indeed of all the missions OIOS undertook to the offices away from Headquarters was that staff of the non-New York duty stations wanted to be included in all aspects of the Department's work: decision-making; policy-making; information-sharing; and the development of procedures.

18. The perceived benefits of the Task Forces were the following:

- They allowed all four duty stations to develop policies and procedures jointly
- At the same time, they allowed the duty stations to conduct day-to-day operations independently
- They would enable the creation of policies and procedures that would be more likely to be sustained since all duty stations would "own" the policies and procedures they had developed
- They would, accordingly, preserve and raise staff morale
- They would develop realistic solutions that would reflect the actual circumstances in all the duty stations.

19. With the assistance of OIOS, reasonably detailed terms of reference, which addressed issues of material interest to staff and essentially reflected their ideas, were developed for each Task Force.

20. OIOS further proposed that each Task Force prepare a report, including recommendations for presentation at the 2004 Coordination Meeting.

21. The Task Force approach was supported by all four duty stations and constitutes the main feature of the present report. Staff and management at Headquarters suggested that the Task Forces be broad-based and that their work be assisted by discipline-based working groups. A set of guiding principles governing the operation of the Task Forces was developed during the consultancy. These principles incorporate the suggestions made by all parties. These principles, a list of Task Forces and their terms of reference are set forth below.

D. Guiding principles of the Task Forces

22. In the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the proposed Task Forces should operate according to the following guiding principles:

- Task Forces should be chaired by staff from different duty stations; the duty station with the greatest need, not the greatest expertise, should chair to help ensure that the work of the Task Force is actually accomplished
- A Headquarters Focal Point should be appointed to monitor progress and report to the Departmental Management Group and all duty stations

- Task Forces should submit reports to the Coordination Meeting in July with recommended policies and procedures for their area of concentration
 - Concrete terms of reference and outputs should be defined for each Task Force by the Focal Point
 - All duty stations should be required to participate actively in all Task Forces
 - Each Task Force should decide whether to include those regional commissions within its purview that maintain their own conference services; however, to ensure that regional commissions are not totally excluded, each Task Force chair should send a copy of the Task Force report to the five regional commissions prior to the July Coordination Meeting
 - Task Force decisions should be reached by consensus
 - Since Task Forces discuss policy issues, they do not need to be staffed by substantive experts. Technical Task Forces must include managers, who will consult with substantive experts on an as-needed basis
 - Each Task Force should decide on its scope and method of work and on the outputs which can be delivered for the 2004 Coordination Meeting
 - Certain matters, such as the composition of the Headquarters Calendar of Meetings cannot be decided by Task Forces. All duty stations should nevertheless be informed about these matters and consulted to determine how they will be affected
 - Each Task Force member has the obligation to consult his/her local colleagues to determine their views and concerns.
23. The foregoing principles were extensively discussed by Departmental staff in all four duty stations. Indeed, many of the principles were proposed by the staff themselves.

E. List of Task Forces

24. The list of Task Forces is as follows:
- (a) Task Force on Harmonization of Statistical Indicators, to be chaired by UNON;
 - (b) Meeting and Planning Task Force, to be chaired by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management;
 - (c) Human Resources Task Force, to be chaired by UNOV;
 - (d) Task Force on Contractual Services, to be chaired by UNOG;
 - (e) Information Technology Policy Task Force, to be chaired by UNOV;
 - (f) Budget and Finance Task Force, to be chaired by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management;
 - (g) Documentation and Publishing Task Force, to be chaired by UNOG;
 - (h) Task Force on Client Orientation, to be chaired by UNON;
 - (i) Task Force on Examinations, chair to be determined.

25. OIOS recommended that five of the Task Forces — letters (a), (c), (d), (f) and (h) — which deal with the more urgent issues, should be formed in time to prepare a report for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management Coordination Meeting in July 2004, as outlined above. The remaining Task Forces should set their priorities and the Chair should prepare a report to the Coordination Meeting, if possible. The top priority for all Task Forces is to share information and recommend policies.

26. Although OIOS does not envisage that the work of existing groups² would be duplicated by the work of the proposed Task Forces, it will be the responsibility of the Focal Point to ensure that there is no duplication. The ultimate aim is to develop a Department for General Assembly and Conference Management Manual of Policies and Procedures and all groups will be contributing to achieve that goal.

27. Duty station representatives on the Task Forces should be at a level senior enough to speak authoritatively on behalf of their duty stations. Practicability should be the key to those representatives' recommendations.

IV. Related implementation issues

A. Staffing capacity study

28. A capacity study of the strengths available in each duty station in each area of specialization would greatly facilitate staff exchanges and staff mobility. The study should assess staffing week by week over a two-year period. It should also provide a blueprint for future reports, which could be completed weekly by all duty stations. The capacity study should be completed only after the work of the Task Force on Harmonization of Statistical Indicators is carried out.

29. The terms of reference for the capacity study should include the following:

- Developing an agreed-upon formula for determining permanent capacity for the various functions of the Department, including, but not limited to, (i) interpretation, (ii) translation, (iii) text processing and (iv) editing
- Applying the formula at all duty stations for each function to determine real permanent capacity
- Developing proposals for quantifying capacity for temporary staff.

30. The Central Planning and Coordination Service of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management could conduct the capacity study with assistance from consultants, if necessary. Those carrying out the capacity study should note that the formulas developed could be adjusted once the results of the Task Force on the Performance Measurement Study — Review of Workload Standards have been obtained.

B. Role of the Focal Point

31. The role of the Focal Point is key to ensuring that the work of the Task Forces is substantial and lasting. There is a risk that without the Focal Point the Task Force

programme will not be properly initiated, jeopardizing the global integration programme and the Department's compliance with the General Assembly's mandate.

32. The Focal Point would, inter alia:

- Drive the Department's global cooperation and integration programme
- Coordinate the work of the Task Forces
- Act when required as the channel between Headquarters and the duty stations
- Prepare, on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General, a circular for Department for General Assembly and Conference Management staff outlining the Cooperative Global Strategy
- Prepare the agenda for the Coordination Meeting
- Coordinate the presentation of the Task Force recommendations to the Coordination Meeting
- Ensure that the results of the Coordination Meeting are presented to the Under-Secretary-General
- Ensure that the approved text forms part of the Manual of Policies and Procedures
- Finalize the preparation of the Manual
- Prepare and implement a programme of staff exchanges
- Support the duty stations in sensitizing clients to the need for better scheduling of meetings in the interests of good global management
- Assist the Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Office in negotiations with the Department of Management regarding the budgetary and administrative structure of the duty stations, the budgets presented by the duty stations and the financial reports of the duty stations
- Assist the Executive Office in monitoring the financial reports of the duty stations
- Support the Executive Office in commissioning a capacity study of the duty stations
- Help to prepare new Secretary-General's Bulletins, as appropriate
- Explore the use of videoconferencing software for communication among duty stations
- Prepare a report on the global integration programme for the General Assembly.

C. Coordination Meeting

33. Annual Coordination Meetings among the four duty stations have been held since 2000 as part of the reform process undertaken by the Secretary-General. The meetings have discussed common approaches and harmonization of policies across duty stations. The upcoming fifth Coordination Meeting will be the first to deal with a formalized global management approach to conference servicing. Based on staff

suggestions and the strong endorsement of OIOS, this year's Coordination Meeting has been extended to three days. Any new strategy or approach, such as the Cooperative Global Strategy, needs to be properly analysed and established through discussion and debate. Discussion of this strategy requires participation by staff and every effort should be made to encourage such participation. It would also be highly desirable for the Directors-General to attend. If this is not possible, they should, ideally, send representatives. In this regard, OIOS believes that an annual meeting of the Under-Secretary-General and the Directors-General would enhance coordination and communication.

D. Staff exchanges

34. A number of staff in all duty stations raised the possibility of introducing a system of staff exchanges. There was particular receptivity to this concept among staff in offices away from Headquarters, who wanted Headquarters staff to spend some time — a month or more — in their offices. Although difficult to quantify, these exchanges would result in real benefits. For example, understanding of one another's constraints and practices would greatly increase and the contacts would facilitate future interaction. However, all staff discussing this issue acknowledged that this would be a costly exercise. The possibility of securing funding from clients for this purpose was raised and could be further explored by the Focal Point of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

E. Selection and appointment of the Chief of Conference Services in each duty station

35. Neither the task force mechanism nor the Focal Point can address the issue of selecting and appointing the head of Conference Services in each duty station. This senior official must work successfully with the relevant Director-General on a daily basis. His/her contractual relationship is, and should remain, with the Director-General. His/her Performance Appraisal System (PAS) performance record is, and should always be, signed by the Director-General. Therefore, the Director-General must play a key role in appointing him or her.

36. At the same time, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management in New York is answerable to the Assembly for the consequences of the actions taken by the heads of Conference Services in duty stations away from Headquarters. Moreover, in keeping with the new global approach and spirit, it is highly desirable for the decision on the appointment of the head of Conference Services not to be made exclusively by the local Director-General.

37. OIOS believes that in the interests of harmonization and integration of conference services worldwide, as required by the General Assembly, it would be desirable for the Under-Secretary-General to approve the appointment of the head of conference services in the offices away from home, although the head would be accountable to the local Director-General. Accordingly, OIOS considers that the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management should be consulted closely and actively before the head of conference services in duty stations outside New York is appointed.

38. One possible way to effect this consultation would be to establish a selection panel. The panel would include the local Director-General, a representative of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and possible selected clients. The decision should be unanimous.

F. Under-Secretary-General/Director-General relationship

39. The majority of the recommendations in the present report relate to operational issues. However, the recommendations are not likely to be implemented successfully and the General Assembly's clear mandate is not likely to be satisfied without a firm and consultative relationship between the Under-Secretary-General and the Directors-General.

40. To ensure the strength of this relationship, the following measures are recommended. They are in addition to the measures set out in paragraphs 35 to 38 above.

- The Under-Secretary-General and the Directors-General should seek to meet together once a year, if possible during the Coordination Meeting and/or during the General Assembly, during discussions on Directors-Generals' budgets. If this is not possible, the Under-Secretary-General should meet each Director-General once a year at the minimum
- It would be desirable for the Directors-General to attend the Coordination Meeting. Failing this, the Directors-General should send representation
- The Directors-General or their designated representative(s) should play a key role in the discussion of the policies and procedures which will form the basis of the Manual
- Minutes of all regular senior staff meetings in all duty stations should be sent to all duty stations, as Directors-General may wish to examine the possibility of nominating their own Focal Point to liaise with the Focal Point in New York.

G. Building-in compliance

41. OIOS found during its missions that staff in offices away from Headquarters were extremely interested in participating in a cooperative approach to the management of conference services. They wanted to play a prominent role in drawing up the manual and to be consulted and communicate more frequently and meaningfully with each other and with Headquarters.

42. It would be useful to build-in some mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Manual, to make certain that there is no retreat from the spirit of cooperation which the Department has introduced. Changing the culture of an organization is never easy or straightforward and every tool possible should be brought to bear.

43. Some of these tools, or incentives, could include:

- Setting of specific targets for each Task Force chair, and a requirement to report to the Under-Secretary-General if those targets are not achieved

- Placing in the Under-Secretary-General's compact a requirement to comply with indicators, such as annual meetings with Directors-General, quarterly communications with Directors-General, appointment of the Focal Point, circulation of a statement on the new cooperative approach, setting up of a Department-wide newsletter and distribution to offices away from Headquarters of the minutes of the weekly Senior Management Group meetings in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
- Establishing a requirement in the Manual that Directors should report quarterly to the Under-Secretary-General on matters relating to integration and the development in the Manual of a template for such reports
- Placing in the job description of senior staff in all duty stations a requirement to demonstrate regular substantive communication with other duty stations and use by superiors of this criterion as a tool when the PAS performance record is prepared
- Rewarding the willingness of staff to relocate.

44. As it has already pointed out, a major drawback of the current system is that the Under-Secretary-General is responsible to the Secretary-General for the budgets of all the duty stations, even though he has no authority over how they spend their funds. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/283 B, stresses that the Department is responsible for the implementation of policy, the formulation of standards and guidelines, overseeing and coordinating United Nations conference services and the overall management of resources under the relevant budget section, while the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi remain responsible and accountable for day-to-day operational activities. In fact, some duty stations have exceeded their budgets, in at least one case by as much as \$17 million as a result of an increase in the use of temporary assistance to service unplanned meetings whose costs were not absorbed by the client.

45. OIOS has proposed a three-pronged strategy which could address this situation and ensure compliance with the limits of the budgets.

46. The first part of the strategy would be for the Under-Secretary-General to circulate an official statement that a duty station must receive prior approval from the Under-Secretary-General for major additional expenditures. Currently, additions to the Calendar of Conferences must be paid for by the organization requesting the additional meeting and full-cost recovery may alleviate overexpenditures in the future. Such a rule would help the duty stations in their negotiations with clients seeking additional meetings.

47. The second part of the strategy would be for the Under-Secretary-General to require duty stations to submit quarterly expenditure reports to the Executive Office at Headquarters, with clear comments highlighting any unusual or untoward developments, such as numerous unexpected meetings. If the Department's Executive Office at Headquarters acquires its extra personnel resources, these staff could be made responsible for monitoring expenditure patterns by the duty stations. The Under-Secretary-General should require the Executive Office to present these data to the Departmental Management Group on a quarterly basis, together with an analysis of the issues and recommendations for improvement.

48. The third part of the strategy would be for the Task Force on Client Orientation to prepare a standard statement for clients emphasizing the new policy set by Headquarters and stating that clients are accordingly requested to ensure that all meetings are strictly necessary.

49. This combination of incentives and other measures should go a considerable way towards ensuring compliance by all duty stations, including New York.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

50. The General Assembly set a very clear mandate for the Department in 2000. Member States did not want to be subject to different policies and practices in different duty stations and accordingly sought greater integration of management in conference services throughout the entire global network. The present report has sought to show that there are many other potential benefits to improving the integration of global management of conference services.

51. OIOS delineated the key components for Departmental consideration and action. The main OIOS proposal is that the Department establish an explicit Cooperative Global Strategy, in which all duty stations participate in setting policies and procedures, which are, with the Under-Secretary-General's approval, codified into a Manual of Policies and Procedures. These steps constitute the centrepiece of the present report.

52. The report makes a number of other proposals to further the introduction of the global concept. Most fundamental is the need for an attitude, or perception, in the four duty stations that they are part of a global network and, as such, have to adopt a cooperative, collaborative approach where the needs and contributions of all duty stations are automatically and systematically taken into account. All of the proposals included in the present report have either emerged directly from the duty stations or have been extensively discussed with them.

53. As mentioned previously, the Department has already determined which steps it wishes to take and is in the process of implementing them.

Recommendation 1

54. OIOS recommends that the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management formulate and actively promote a cooperative and consultative culture, in which all duty stations' views and contributions are valued and systematically sought and where all information is freely shared (MC/04/001/001).

Recommendation 2

55. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management should establish nine cross-duty station Task Forces on: Harmonization of Statistical Indicators; Meeting and Planning; Human Resources; Contractual Services; Information Technology Policy; Budget and Finance; Documentation and Publishing; Client Orientation; and Examinations. The Department should also designate a focal point at Headquarters to coordinate the work of the Task Forces. The Task Forces should make recommendations to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management

concerning policies and procedures for each of their respective areas. The recommendations should be considered at the July 2004 Coordination Meeting and codified in a Manual of Policies and Procedures (MC/04/001/002).

Recommendation 3

56. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management should promulgate mandatory reporting requirements for staff to ensure compliance with the Manual of Policies and Procedures (MC/04/001/003).

Recommendation 4

57. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management should harmonize the administrative and budgetary structures of the conference servicing components at all four duty stations (MC/04/001/004).

Recommendation 5

58. The appropriate Directors-General should consult actively with the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management on senior staff appointments in the four duty stations. In addition, the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management should consider the feasibility of establishing a system of staff exchanges among duty stations (MC/04/001/005).

(Signed) Dileep Nair
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

¹ These issues are currently being addressed by the Task Forces referred to in paragraph 13.

² Existing groups include: the Information and Communications Technology Board; the Task Force on Ways and Means to achieve Compliance with Relevant Guidelines on Page Limits; and the Task Force on the Performance Measurement Study — Review of Workload Standards.



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Item 20 of the preliminary list*

**Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples**

Question of Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/109 of 9 December 2003, summarizes the reports that have been submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.



1. On 9 December 2003, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 58/109 on the question of Western Sahara. The Secretary-General, in close cooperation with the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, has continued to exercise his good offices with the parties concerned. The present report, which covers the period from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004, is submitted in accordance with paragraph 9 of resolution 58/109.
2. On 31 July 2003, the Security Council adopted resolution 1495 (2003), by which it extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 October 2003. Under that resolution, the Council, *inter alia*, continued to support strongly the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, James A. Baker III, and then Peace Plan for Self-determination of the People of Western Sahara (S/2003/565, annex II) as an optimum political solution on the basis of agreement between the parties; called upon the parties to work with the United Nations and with each other towards acceptance and implementation of the Peace Plan; called upon the parties and the States of the region to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy; and requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on the situation before the end of October 2003 that would contain progress made in the implementation of the resolution.
3. Pursuant to the above-mentioned resolution, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council, on 16 October 2003, a report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2003/1016) in which he informed the Council that the Kingdom of Morocco had on 17 September 2003 sent a high-level delegation to meet with his Personal Envoy. During the meeting, Morocco had asked for more time to reflect and consult before giving its final response to the operative paragraphs of Council resolution 1495 (2003), in particular the second, in which the Council had called upon the parties to work with the United Nations and with each other towards acceptance and implementation of the Peace Plan.
4. In his report, the Secretary-General also informed the Security Council that following the appointment of William Lacy Swing (United States of America) as his new Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 5 August 2003 he had informed the President of the Council of his intention to appoint Alvaro de Soto (Peru) as his Special Representative for Western Sahara.
5. In concluding his report, the Secretary-General recalled that by its letter of 6 July, the Frente POLISARIO had officially accepted the Peace Plan. He also added that he had acceded to Morocco's request to give it more time to reflect and consult before giving its final response.
6. On 28 October 2003, the Security Council adopted resolution 1513 (2003), in which it extended the mandate of MINURSO until 31 January 2004 and requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on the situation by the end of the mandate.
7. Pursuant to resolution 1513 (2003), the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council on 19 January 2004 a report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2004/39), in which he informed the Council that his Personal Envoy had had a further meeting, on 23 December 2003, with a Moroccan delegation to discuss issues pertaining to Morocco's final response to the operative paragraphs of resolution 1495 (2003) of 31 July 2003.

8. In his report, the Secretary-General also informed the Security Council that on 29 October 2003, his new Special Representative for Western Sahara, Alvaro de Soto, had assumed his duties in Laayoune. In November 2003, he had visited Rabat, Tindouf, Algiers and Nouakchott, where he had held introductory meetings with senior officials from the Government of Morocco, the Frente POLISARIO, the Government of Algeria and the Government of Mauritania.

9. In concluding his report, the Secretary-General stated that following the discussions that his Personal Envoy had had with the delegation of Morocco on 23 December 2003, he was of the view that the mandate of MINURSO should be extended to allow his Personal Envoy to consult further with Morocco on its final response to the Peace Plan.

10. On 30 January 2004, the Security Council adopted resolution 1523 (2004), in which it extended the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2004 and requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on the situation before the end of the mandate.

11. Pursuant to the above-mentioned resolution, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council, on 23 April 2004, a report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2004/325 and Add.1), in which he informed the Council that his Personal Envoy had held two meetings with delegations from Morocco, on 2 April and 15 April 2004, and a meeting with a delegation from the Frente POLISARIO, on 31 March 2004. During the 15 April meeting, Morocco had delivered its final response to the Peace Plan, as an enclosure to a letter dated 9 April 2004 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco (S/2004/325 and Add.1, annex I).

12. In his report, the Secretary-General also stated that, as the Council would recall, by its resolution 1495 (2003), which had been adopted unanimously, the Council had expressed its support for the Peace Plan as an optimum political solution on the basis of agreement between the parties. The Council had also called upon the parties to work with the United Nations and with each other towards acceptance and implementation of the Peace Plan. However, while Morocco's final response to the Peace Plan had expressed a willingness to continue to work to achieve a political solution to the conflict over Western Sahara, it had also clearly stated that an "autonomy-based political solution can only be final", which had adverse implications for self-determination, as called for in resolution 1429 (2002).

13. In his report, the Secretary-General further informed the Security Council that in February 2004, he had asked his Special Representative for Western Sahara, Alvaro de Soto, to head his mission of good offices in Cyprus, in the capacity of Special Adviser on Cyprus. In the meantime, the Force Commander of MINURSO, Major General Gyorgy Száraz (Hungary), had been acting as Officer-in-Charge of the Mission.

14. In concluding his report, the Secretary-General observed that it was clear from past actions by the Security Council and its debates on the issue that there was opposition to a non-consensual solution to the conflict over Western Sahara. Further, in his view, and that of his Personal Envoy, Morocco's final response to the Peace Plan would have required the parties involved to agree to negotiate a solution for Western Sahara based on "autonomy within the framework of Moroccan sovereignty". The issue of sovereignty was, of course, the fundamental issue that had divided the parties for all these years. The Secretary-General added that given

the history and those facts, in his view and in the view of his Personal Envoy, this realistically left only two options for the Council to consider. Option one would have been to terminate MINURSO and return the issue of Western Sahara to the General Assembly, thereby recognizing and acknowledging that, after the passage of more than 13 years and the expenditure of more than \$600 million, the United Nations was not going to solve the problem of Western Sahara without requiring that one or both of the parties should do something that they would not voluntarily agree to do. Option two would have been to try once again to induce the parties to work towards acceptance and implementation of the Peace Plan.

15. The Secretary-General concluded that it was his view and that of his Personal Envoy that the Peace Plan still constituted the best political solution to the conflict over Western Sahara that provided for self-determination, as required by paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 1429 (2002). He had therefore hoped that the Council would reaffirm its recent unanimous support for the Peace Plan and would once again call upon the parties to work with the United Nations and each other towards acceptance and implementation of the Peace Plan.

16. On 29 April 2004, the Security Council adopted resolution 1541 (2004), in which it reaffirmed its support for the Peace Plan as an optimum political solution on the basis of agreement between the two parties; also reaffirmed its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy towards achieving a mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute over Western Sahara; called upon all the parties and the States of the region to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy; decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2004; and requested that the Secretary-General provide a report on the situation before the end of the present mandate including an evaluation of the mission size necessary for MINURSO to carry out its mandated tasks, with a view towards its effecting possible reduction.

17. On 15 June 2004, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the President of the Security Council (S/2004/492) referring to his letter of 17 March 1997 (S/1997/236), in which he had informed the Council of his decision to appoint Mr. James A. Baker III as his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to help him assess the situation and make recommendations in regard to all questions related to the impasse in the implementation of the Settlement Plan. During the seven years that Mr. Baker had served as his Personal Envoy, he had held 14 formal and numerous informal meetings with the parties, Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, and the neighbouring countries Algeria and Mauritania, and had proposed a number of possible approaches to solving the conflict. While progress had been made, the parties had not been able to reach an agreement. In that connection, Mr. Baker had informed the Secretary-General that he believed that he had done all he could on that issue and therefore offered his resignation as Personal Envoy. The Secretary-General informed the Council that it was with deep regret that he had accepted Mr. Baker's resignation.

18. In the same letter, the Secretary-General had further informed the Security Council that he had decided that Mr. Alvaro de Soto, in his capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, would continue to work with the parties, and neighbouring countries, in pursuit of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which would provide for the self-

determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

19. With regard to the activities of the Identification Commission, during the period covered by this report, from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that the Commission had successfully completed its overall work plan, including the scanning, archiving and transfer of all of its identification files and sensitive documents to the United Nations Office at Geneva, where they were now safely stored. The Commission had also finalized all studies related to its activities. As a result, the last staff of the Commission had completed their assignments with MINURSO on 31 December 2003. However, the authorized posts for the Commission had been kept in the proposed budget for the financial year 2004-2005, in order to expedite the recruitment of expertise for MINURSO should the need arise.

20. As to military matters, during the period covered by this report, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that the Frente POLISARIO had continued to impose some limitations on the freedom of movement of MINURSO in areas of the Territory east of the berm. Although the nature of those limitations had not significantly affected the ability of MINURSO to monitor the situation in those areas, their removal would have further facilitated the Mission's ground and air patrolling activities.

21. Concerning the issue of prisoners of war and persons unaccounted for, during the period covered by this report, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council that, on 1 September 2003, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had repatriated to the Kingdom of Morocco 243 Moroccan prisoners of war who had been released by the Frente POLISARIO on 14 August 2003 in response to a request by a Member State. On 7 November 2003, the Frente POLISARIO had announced the release of a further 300 Moroccan prisoners of war, who were repatriated to Morocco on the following day under the auspices of ICRC. This was the largest group of Moroccan prisoners ever liberated. On 13 February 2004, the Frente POLISARIO had announced the release of a further 100 Moroccan prisoners of war, who were subsequently repatriated to Morocco under the auspices of ICRC.

22. The Secretary-General also reported some progress concerning the determination of the fate of persons unaccounted for. From 27 to 29 May 2004, ICRC had interviewed four individuals in the Territory who had appeared on a Frente POLISARIO list of persons unaccounted for; the four were subsequently removed from the list.

23. The Secretary-General stated that, while he welcomed the progress made, 514 such prisoners were still in detention, some of them for more than 20 years. He therefore reiterated his call to the Frente POLISARIO to expedite the release of all remaining prisoners, in compliance with international humanitarian law and numerous Security Council resolutions and statements by the President of the Council. He also called upon both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to continue to cooperate with ICRC in accounting for those who were still missing in relation to the conflict.

24. With regard to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the area, during the period covered by this report, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that while the food

pipeline for the Western Saharan refugees had remained relatively stable throughout most of 2003, shortages of relief aid at the beginning of 2004 had continued to cause acute and chronic malnutrition among the Western Saharan refugees in the Tindouf area.

25. The World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR had undertaken a joint assessment mission to the Tindouf area refugee camps in January 2004. Representatives of nine Member States, both current and potential donors, had also taken part in the assessment. The Secretary-General reported that, despite improvements in recent months due to increased donor support, the food situation in the refugee camps had remained unstable. Unless additional relief supplies were made available, refugees might start facing a shortage of cereals in May 2004, and a shortage of other essential commodities a month later. Urgent contributions to UNHCR and WFP assistance programmes were therefore required in order to overcome the foreseen shortages. The Secretary-General had called upon the donor community to respond generously to these appeals.

26. During the period covered by this report, the Secretary-General also informed the Security Council that UNHCR and MINURSO had been promoting with the parties a package of confidence-building measures. From 2 to 5 October 2003, a UNHCR delegation, accompanied by a representative of MINURSO, had visited Rabat, Algiers and Tindouf for technical-level discussions. During discussions in Rabat on 2 and 3 October, the Moroccan authorities had stated that, as a matter of sovereignty, the Moroccan postal service would need to be involved in handling mail in the Territory. In that connection, it was recalled that the original plan had envisaged that mail would be collected and distributed by UNHCR.

27. During discussions in Algiers on 4 October, UNHCR had reminded Algeria that it was still awaiting its formal concurrence, as the country of asylum, for the resumption of the UNHCR-operated telephone service between the refugee camps and the Territory. Algeria had reiterated its earlier position that what was acceptable to Saharan representatives would be acceptable to Algeria, within the limits of its responsibilities as the country of asylum.

28. In its discussions with the UNHCR delegation, the Frente POLISARIO had expressed its readiness to resume the UNHCR telephone service and to start the mail service under the terms of the UNHCR confidence-building measures. This had represented progress in regard to the telephone service, as Morocco had maintained its position that it would pursue telephone service under the terms of UNHCR confidence-building measures.

29. The third element of the confidence-building measures, the exchange of family visits, was not in the agenda of the UNHCR delegation given the long-standing disagreement between the parties over the selection criteria for the participants in the exchange. In this connection, it was recalled that the Frente POLISARIO had insisted that only those persons whose names appeared on the MINURSO provisional list of voters should be entitled to benefit from the exchange between the Territory and the refugee camps. Morocco had maintained, on the other hand, that any person in the refugee camps or in the Territory who had a family member on the other side should be entitled to participate in the exchange, regardless of the list. During its discussions with UNHCR, the Frente POLISARIO had indicated that it had changed its view on this issue and was now ready to agree to the immediate exchange of family visits between the Tindouf refugee camps and the Territory,

regardless of the concerned individual's status on the list. It was also recalled that Mauritania had already agreed to the confidence-building project under the terms proposed by UNHCR and had expressed its readiness to fully support its implementation.

30. In the course of November 2003, UNHCR, in close consultation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, had submitted to Morocco, the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria, as the country of asylum, a detailed plan of action defining the modalities for the implementation of those measures. Consequently, UNHCR had adjusted its initial plan of action, taking into account the comments, observations and suggestions made by Morocco, the Frente POLISARIO and Algeria, while striving to preserve the overall integrity and humanitarian nature of the project. A new version of the plan of action for the confidence-building measures had been submitted to the parties for their final consideration. In late January and early February 2004, the parties, and Algeria as the country of asylum, had communicated their approval of the revised plan of action.

31. The Secretary-General also informed the Security Council that the first exchange of family visits had commenced successfully on 5 March 2004. Despite some initial complaints by both parties at the outset of the exercise, the exchange of family visits had run smoothly, with the full cooperation of the parties, as well as Algeria, as country of asylum. In the light of the positive developments emerging from the first phase of the family visits, UNHCR, with the full support of MINURSO, hoped to carry on with the programme for an initial period of six months, to be reviewed thereafter in consultation with the parties. The Secretary-General urged the parties to continue to extend their cooperation to UNHCR and MINURSO for the smooth implementation of the family visits. It was his hope that the parties would respond positively to the call of UNHCR to preserve their exclusive humanitarian character. Meanwhile, he appealed to donor countries for urgent contributions for the implementation of family visits, which required a great deal of logistic, monitoring and administrative resources.

32. The Secretary-General further informed the Security Council that the UNHCR-operated telephone connection between the refugee camps in Algeria and the Territory had been re-established on 12 January 2004 and had continued to function. With regard to the mail service between the Territory and the Tindouf area refugee camps, while the Moroccan authorities had notified UNHCR of their wish to pursue discussions in the near future, no significant progress had been achieved. UNHCR remained ready to implement this service in accordance with the modalities it had initially proposed or under any other terms that would ensure the approval of all concerned.



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**Operational activities for development: operational activities
for development of the United Nations system**

Advancement of women

Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, prepared pursuant to Assembly resolution 39/125 of 14 December 1984.

Summary

The present report provides a review and update of the programme and activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the year 2003. The report tracks UNIFEM overall progress and highlights concrete results in the implementation of its Strategy and Business Plan (2000-2003) during the year under review. The report concludes with a set of recommendations on how UNIFEM programming effectiveness and organizational effectiveness can further be strengthened.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.



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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a review and update of the programmes and activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the year 2003. While UNIFEM is now moving into its next four-year plan, this report tracks progress and highlights concrete results in the implementation of the last year of the UNIFEM Strategy and Business Plan (2000-2003). The report concludes with a set of recommendations, based on a review by the UNIFEM Consultative Committee, on how UNIFEM programming and organizational effectiveness can be further strengthened.

2. 2003 was the final year of the three-year term of the members of the Consultative Committee (Croatia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Namibia and the Netherlands). Members of the Committee continued to provide valuable guidance and advice to the Fund. In particular, the Committee was instrumental in the development of the new UNIFEM multi-year funding framework 2004-2007.

II. Programme

A. Overview

3. In its Strategy and Business Plan, UNIFEM defined its programmes as being designed to achieve three main objectives: (a) strengthening women's economic security and rights, (b) enhancing women's leadership in governance and peace-building, and (c) promoting women's human rights by highlighting the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and eliminating violence against women.

B. Strengthening women's economic security and rights

4. The work of UNIFEM in support of women's economic security and rights has focused on the following in 2003: promoting an enabling environment for women's equal ownership and access to economic resources and assets; incorporating a gender perspective in macroeconomic frameworks and building the capacity of countries to manage globalization and economic transition from the perspective of poor women; and strengthening women's economic capacity and rights. Results in all of these areas have been greatly enhanced through gender-responsive budget initiatives and promoting the use of gender-sensitive data and statistics.

1. Promoting an enabling environment for women's equal ownership and access to economic resources

5. The work of UNIFEM in this area has focused on land rights and the rights of home-based workers and migrant women workers. Significant policy changes and commitments relating to land rights have been obtained in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and support for women's safe migration was strengthened in Nepal. Support for the Platform on Women's Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa contributed to the establishment of a land desk at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which will work with the Gender Unit to influence national land policies. In Morocco, UNIFEM support for research and advocacy by women's

groups contributed to groundbreaking reform of the Family Law, strengthening women's rights to inheritance and in other areas.

6. Training on economic and social rights was provided in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. In Peru, this training contributed to the development of equal opportunity plans with the three women governors and 32 women mayors elected in Peru in 2002, while in Ecuador, the non-governmental organization (NGO) GAMMA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education of Azuay Province to work together to include gender-sensitive economic and social rights training in high school curricula. Also in Ecuador, the training led to the establishment of an economic rights network composed of over 60 women's organizations, which is advocating for gender mainstreaming in government programmes on micro-credit.

7. Strengthened networks of home-based workers successfully lobbied for important legal and policy changes in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, a home-based workers' association was registered. In Nepal seven district networking committees were formed by HomeNet. In India, a comprehensive proposal on social protection was submitted to the Government and in Pakistan, options are being explored to cover organized home-based workers under a national social security scheme.

2. Engendering macroeconomic frameworks

8. UNIFEM continues to expand the availability of tools and analysis through gender-responsive budgeting and incorporating a gender perspective in data and statistics. This work is taking place through intensified support to multidisciplinary networks. Increased efforts are also being dedicated to incorporating a gender perspective in poverty reduction strategies and trade policies.

9. Gender-responsive budgets support provide a tool for mainstreaming gender and monitoring policies and programmes to promote gender equality. In 2003 UNIFEM achieved notable progress in developing methodologies, building capacity and advocating for gender-responsive policies in 20 countries.

10. Governments have issued guidelines to facilitate the inclusion of gender analysis in the budget formulation process as well as the participation in that process of women's groups in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Mexico, Tanzania and Uganda. In Ecuador, the findings of a gender budget analysis in the city of Alitre resulted in the mayor's committing municipal funds to support women's issues. In Mexico, as a result of extensive lobbying by NGOs, the Federal Chamber of Deputies and the Equity and Gender Commission earmarked 43 million pesos in the 2003 budget (6 per cent of the total) to programmes that promote gender equality, and 14 line ministries are now required to report quarterly on the status of these programmes. In Uganda, the findings of a budget analysis undertaken by the Forum for Women and Democracy led to the adoption of a resolution by the Luwero district council to the effect that all vacancies in the district administration should be filled with female staff. The Chief Administrative Officer of Luwero issued a directive to heads of department for more gender-specific service delivery, to be monitored by using sex-disaggregated data on beneficiaries, especially in the agricultural extension services. In the Kabale district in Uganda, women's groups obtained the district council's undertaking that women will benefit from district contracts, which account for 80 per cent of the district budget.

11. With regard to revenue, analysis in Senegal showed that women working in the formal sector are taxed at a higher rate than men, who are considered the heads of household and family breadwinners. The Ministry of the Family and National Solidarity and women's organizations, with support from UNIFEM and other partners, are actively advocating for the modification of the family code to replace the concept of "fatherhood authority" with "joint parenthood" in order to eliminate the basis for the gender bias in the taxation of salaries.
12. A global guidebook for parliamentarians is being developed with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In Mexico, training for newly elected parliamentarians facilitated gender-sensitive public policy action and promoted interest in similar training courses for legislative and executive staff. Similar activities are being planned with the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres*, which is creating a gender-responsive unit. Requests from other Central American Governments and officials for assistance in applying this tool to their own budget exercises led to collaboration between UNIFEM and the Central American Parliament (*Parlamento Centro Americano*) (PARLACEN), the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas (*Red Mujeres de Parlamentarias de las Américas*) and other agencies in organizing a seminar for 150 women parliamentarians from Central America and the Caribbean. Participants identified actions to facilitate implementation of gender-responsive budgets and ways in which PARLACEN and the *Red de Parlamentarias de las Américas* could support this work.
13. In East Africa, UNIFEM and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the East African Gender Budgeting Network (EAGBN), which has brought together NGOs, researchers and policy analysts in 13 countries to form a constituency for collective advocacy and policy change. An EAGBN workshop convened 70 government and civil society representatives to share gender and pro-poor analyses of their 2003/2004 budgets. The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme has initiated consultations with government officials on macroeconomic models for expenditures and revenues, in an effort to find ways to include gender considerations in the budget and economic policy-making process.
14. UNIFEM continued to support South-South exchanges within and between regions to build capacity of networks of economists and advocates that can influence macroeconomic policies. Building on lessons learned from a training model developed with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a training seminar on gender perspectives in macroeconomics for poverty eradication was held in Senegal, in partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) for a core group of African economists and policy makers. The training resulted in the expansion and strengthening of the Network of African Women Economists (NAWE). In a step to strengthen South-North cooperation also, NAWE subsequently signed an agreement with the Women in Development Europe network to cooperate on regional training seminars.
15. UNIFEM supported efforts to incorporate a gender perspective in poverty reduction strategies through partnerships with regional experts and women's NGOs in Cape Verde, Cambodia, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Swaziland. Methodological tools for incorporating a gender perspective in poverty reduction strategies were developed and applied in Cape Verde, Niger and Senegal, and in the case of Cape Verde, the United Nations Country Team agreed to allocate specific budget lines for work on gender and the poverty reduction strategy. In South Africa,

UNIFEM and the UNDP Subregional Resource Facility co-hosted a regional expert group meeting on gender mainstreaming in poverty reduction strategy papers. Work on gender mainstreaming in the monitoring and implementation of Kenya's poverty reduction strategy has taken place in four districts, and a gender and information and communication technologies (ICT) component has been replicated by UNDP in eight districts, with plans for expansion to eight more. In South-East Asia, following a collaborative gender assessment in support of poverty reduction strategy development in Cambodia, UNIFEM facilitated a participatory process for the Second Regional Meeting on Gender and the Poverty Reduction Strategies organized by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

16. In the absence of sex-disaggregated data that would make adequate responses from Governments and the United Nations possible, UNIFEM supported Governments in collecting and using gender-sensitive statistics for the formulation of policies and programmes in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, Egypt, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Syria and Timor-Leste. Databases of sex-disaggregated statistics were developed in Burundi and Morocco in partnership with the national statistics institutions. In Cuba, the Government Statistics Office adopted a gender indicators system. In Egypt, Jordan and Syria, standardized checklists on the formal and informal economy, as well as on violence against women and on women in decision-making, were developed and tested. In addition, gender audits and national plans of action to produce gender-sensitive statistical data were developed with statistics departments in order to incorporate a gender perspective in national censuses. Post-conflict countries offer an opportunity to incorporate gender sensitivity in statistical systems from the beginning, as in Afghanistan, where an action plan for mainstreaming gender has been developed in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Central Statistical Office and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In South-East Asia, regional workshops, with support from ESCAP produced a participatory learning methodology and provided inputs for a kit on incorporating a gender perspective in national statistical systems. In Latin America, UNIFEM, in partnership with ECLAC, produced a guide on gender indicators, which includes a basic set of indicators to monitor progress towards achieving gender equality commitments.

3. Strengthening women's economic capacities and rights

17. In response to continued demand from partners on the ground, work to strengthen women's economic capacity has evolved from supporting small, income-generating projects to a programmatic focus on enlarging opportunities within an economic sector or subsector. Experience has shown that success requires building the capacity both of individual women producers and entrepreneurs and of the intermediary institutions and networks to provide needed training, technological services and/or credit.

18. UNIFEM supported entrepreneurial development in all regions. Results were achieved at both the community and the national levels. In Jordan, where tourism was identified as a strategic entry point for women's entrepreneurship, a training programme for women in this sector was developed with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. In Romania, a UNIFEM and UNDP review of the situation of rural women entrepreneurs resulted in greater efforts by a government fund to extend credit and support to women. In Zimbabwe a group of women entrepreneurs were

supported in a pilot project on food processing and are now exporting to Botswana, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

19. Expanding women's livelihood options in post-conflict countries is urgent and possible. Examples from UNIFEM experience in Afghanistan and Rwanda are pertinent. UNIFEM has explored the creation of public-private partnerships, including strategic alliances with local and international private-sector actors, among them the Business Council for Peace, a New York-based women's network. In Rwanda, this partnership has enabled the members of the AVEGA widows' association to sell their handcrafted baskets, a main source of income, on an international scale. Eziba, a member of the business council and retailer of artisan handicrafts, is marketing the products on the web and through direct sales. So far, the widows have grossed over \$50,000 in orders. In Afghanistan, the business council has supported the Afghan Women's Business Council (AWBC) by providing training videos on women's entrepreneurship development and computers. In addition, UNIFEM brought in international merchandisers and a marketing specialist from North America to assess the export potential of products made by women's groups and start initial exports worth about \$15,000 through AWBC.

20. UNIFEM support to women's economic capacity also includes building women's ICT skills. In Jordan, a partnership between UNIFEM, the Government and Cisco to enhance women's access to the information technology (IT) sector, provided training for over 200 women. An ICT Career Day, organized with Jordanian MobileCom, was attended by 20 leading ICT companies to promote the recruitment of UNIFEM/Cisco graduates and awareness has grown within the private sector about equal opportunity issues. These successes have led to plans to replicate the programme in Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. In Africa, a groundbreaking UNIFEM initiative, "Bridging the gender digital divide", is seeking to empower African women through innovative uses of ICTs. Guided by an advisory the committee comprised of African IT entrepreneurs based in the diaspora, the initiative was launched in Uganda in May 2003. The resulting Kampala Declaration expressed the commitment of eight African Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and Africans in the diaspora to bridge the gender digital divide in Africa.

C. Enhancing women's leadership in governance and peace-building

21. UNIFEM work in support of women's leadership in governance and peace-building focuses on promoting peace and security by providing assistance to women in conflict situations and supporting their participation in peace processes; and on increasing women's political participation by strengthening the gender focus in electoral, constitutional, legislative and judicial processes. UNIFEM has supported women's empowerment and leadership initiatives in 27 countries in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. During 2003, the work of UNIFEM in these areas achieved the following five significant results.

1. Strengthening of gender-focused information collection and knowledge creation on conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms

22. In keeping with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in which the Council reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts

and in peace-building, and noted the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, UNIFEM has stepped up efforts to foster gender-sensitive information collection and dissemination. Foremost among these is the Women, War and Security portal — www.womenwarpeace.org — which captures information relating to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and covers gender equality issues and resources in over 30 countries that are currently or have recently been on the Security Council agenda. The site, which received close to 1.2 million hits in its first four months, is designed to provide policy makers, activists and scholars with timely and relevant information, and includes gender profiles on pertinent themes such as displacement, health, reconstruction and violence, and information about relevant United Nations country team and UNIFEM programming.

23. UNIFEM is developing capacity of staff and partners in early warning analysis, a growing body of work that has been largely devoid of gender analysis. In East Africa, UNIFEM is partnering the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in a process of incorporating a gender perspective in the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism and the National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Units.

2. Support for enhancing humanitarian assistance and protection for women in conflict situations

24. UNIFEM works with other United Nations agencies to promote a gender perspective in policies and programmes aimed at protecting and assisting women and girls in conflict situations and during peace processes, when gender-based violence often increases. In preparation for the 2004 Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) for Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Tajikistan, UNIFEM mobilized support for the protection of and assistance to women during conflict. As a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Action, UNIFEM supported an external assessment of the CAP process to identify strategies for strengthening a gender perspective in future appeals.

25. In Peru and Sierra Leone, UNIFEM is supporting women's groups to advocate for the inclusion of gender-based violations on the agenda of each of their country's truth and reconciliation committee. As a result of support to the Peruvian *Comisión de Derechos Humanos*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru declared rape a weapon of war and established a subcommittee on gender. In June 2003, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission declared that victims of sexual violence and children born as a result are entitled to reparations. As part of its efforts to ensure that due attention is given to gender-based crimes in Sierra Leone, UNIFEM was among the agencies that submitted recommendations to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in that country on responding to the needs of women survivors of human rights abuses.

3. Making women and gender perspectives central to peace processes

26. UNIFEM supports women's participation in peace-building and helps to leverage the political, financial and technical support needed for these efforts to have an impact on peace efforts. Working regionally and nationally, UNIFEM brings together disparate groups of women to enable them to develop a common agenda;

helps to incorporate a gender dimension in the implementation of peace accords; and assists in developing a grass-roots peace agenda. During 2003, UNIFEM advocated for women's voices and participation in peacemaking and peace-building in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Liberia and Somalia. UNIFEM support for a women's resource centre at the IGAD-sponsored Somali peace talks provided women delegates and observers with the essential knowledge and skills that they needed to influence the peace process and the draft Somali charter, which includes a provision for a 12 per cent quota of seats for women in the transitional parliament. In Colombia, UNIFEM focused on building consensus within the women's movement to improve lobbying effectiveness and ensure a more effective participation in the event of peace talks. Nearly 300 women selected 12 out of 600 proposals — six for the current pre-negotiation phase and six for a future negotiations stage. And in October 2003 an Equity and Gender Pact was supported by President Uribe and signed by government authorities in the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

4. Supporting gender justice in post-conflict peace-building

27. UNIFEM is working with national counterparts in Burundi, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua to help translate commitments to gender equality, as set forth in peace agreements, into action. UNIFEM collaborated with the Implementation Monitoring Committee for the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi to organize workshops on critical issues relating to women and conflict and to identify ways to promote women's role in peace-building. In El Salvador, UNIFEM supported its local partner *Las Dignas* in formulating a "Pact for women's participation in politics" that laid out an agenda for increasing women's political participation. A subsequent workshop for 30 women from El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua identified entry points for women leaders to engage more strategically in influencing decision-making on gender issues.

28. To increase women's participation in conflict resolution, UNIFEM helped establish coalitions and strengthened the capacity of women leaders in negotiation and conflict resolution through training in Central Asia. National networks have been formed in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia and now constitute the regional Women for Peace Coalition, which is devising a strategy to promote women's participation in peace, security and development in the region.

5. Strengthened women's political participation

29. UNIFEM supported women's political participation at the national and district levels and worked with women parliamentarians in a variety of countries. In South Asia, the capacity of women parliamentarians was strengthened and information-sharing promoted through the South Asia Committee for the Political Empowerment of Women, which works closely with the Alliance for Women's Political Empowerment, a consortium of women NGOs, activists, academicians and journalists. In Kosovo, gender training conducted in collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and municipal gender focal points led to the establishment of gender equality committees in 11 of 15 participating municipalities. In Mexico, where UNIFEM has focused on strengthening women's leadership and participation in democracy-building and the construction of full citizenship for women, especially indigenous women, an agreement was signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on respect for the rights

of women and indigenous communities within the framework of the Puebla-Panama Plan and other agreements. In Iraq, where transitional government structures are still being created, UNIFEM is supporting the establishment of a national network of women groups to develop a common platform for advocacy on gender issues.

30. The UNIFEM programme in Afghanistan focuses on gender justice and economic security and rights, with an emphasis on supporting newly emerging institutions of government and civil society to build gender-responsive policies and programmes. Key achievements have included the establishment, with many partners, including the Government, of four women's development centres across the country and four centres for internally displaced women in the Shamali Plains. The centres, which attract thousands of women and girls, offer a venue for training, awareness-raising, and mutual support. At these centres, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and UNIFEM are raising awareness among women about the upcoming elections and providing a venue for women to register to vote. In collaboration with UNDP and others, UNIFEM is supporting the Ministry of Women's Affairs in mainstreaming gender into the work of other ministries and is linking newly emerging advocacy NGOs for women's empowerment and rights, including the Afghan Women Journalist's Forum, the Afghan Women's Business Council and a network of women's NGOs working on legal literacy. A high priority has been to facilitate linkages between women's NGOs and government bodies, including the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Information and Culture.

31. In southern Africa, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, with UNIFEM support, organized an initial meeting in May 2003 to build the skills of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus in leadership, gender and human rights, and lobbying and advocacy. The meeting agreed on a strategy for the Executive Committee of the Caucus to undertake lobbying and advocacy missions to countries holding elections between 2003 and 2005 in order to achieve the 30 per cent target of women in political and decision-making structures stipulated in the SADC Gender and Development Declaration.

32. Central to the work of UNIFEM is the development of both national strategies for the advancement of women and gender equality laws. In 2003, UNIFEM supported the formulation and implementation of national action plans and policies for gender equality in Burundi, Eritrea, Kosovo, Mongolia, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. UNIFEM also assisted the East African Community in undertaking a regional study on gender and community development, which will serve as the basis for developing a regional gender policy. In Kosovo, UNIFEM and the Office of Gender Affairs of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) are collaborating in supporting the new draft gender equality law.

D. Promoting women's human rights by highlighting the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and eliminating violence against women

33. A human rights-based approach is the cornerstone of all UNIFEM programming. Programmes focus specifically on building the capacity of rights holders and duty bearers to implement regional and global agreements related to

women's human rights norms and standards. In 2003 work on this thematic area has been characterized by progress towards three results.

1. Expanded capacity for effective implementation at the national level of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

34. UNIFEM places a special emphasis on realizing women's human rights through support for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which has now been ratified by 177 Member States. It works closely with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to link local and global issues and opportunities to the implementation of the Convention.

35. National and regional partnerships have been facilitated among Governments as well as between Governments, civil society and United Nations organizations. UNIFEM forged a partnership with the Government of Croatia in 2002 to raise awareness and stimulate regional action on implementation of the Convention, and secured endorsement by the Governments of Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. In 2003, representatives of each country (including three members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) formed national working groups and decided to focus on the application of the Convention in two priority areas: political participation and domestic violence. The process culminated with a high-level conference in Dubrovnik in 2003 to showcase results and provide a platform for Governments to present commitments on which they were ready to move. Partnerships have also been built in the Pacific, East Africa and Morocco. UNIFEM works closely with UNDP in the Pacific to convene an annual donor and agency consultation, which coordinates support for the implementation of the Convention. At the national level, UNIFEM provided support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Samoa to convene a national symposium on the Convention for representatives of key government sectors, local governments, women's organizations and community-based organizations, which informed Samoa's report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and has led to the development of a national plan of action on the Convention. In East Africa, UNIFEM and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) supported a regional conference on women's human rights to share country experiences and strengthen a regional approach to the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. Dialogue between Tanzania and Uganda regarding the legal language needed to protect women's land rights contributed to the inclusion of a consent clause in Uganda's Land Act. UNIFEM has supported the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) in Africa in enhancing the capacity of the judiciary to protect and advance women's human rights through the application of international human rights standards. Workshops in Botswana, South Africa, Nigeria and Zambia provided training for judges in the application of the Convention and other international and regional human rights standards and principles to cases of gender-based violence and gender discrimination. The training, which has led to the adaptation of curricula at judicial training institutes, received support from the highest levels of the judiciary and government in the countries where the workshops were held, and led to the collection of data on the case decisions (available on the IAWJ web site) for use by judges throughout Africa and in other regions. In southern Africa, UNIFEM supported the creation of a southern African women judges' network, which will focus on correcting gender

bias in judicial systems, increasing women's representation in the judiciary, and encouraging the application of the Convention and other international human rights standards in judicial decisions.

2. Strengthened policies and programmes to end violence against women and girls

36. UNIFEM programming focuses on linking innovative efforts to end violence against women to opportunities to replicate and scale up successful strategies derived from the experience of the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995. Since its inception, the Trust Fund has awarded \$7.4 million in grants to 157 initiatives in more than 80 countries.

37. Building on lessons learned from projects supported through the Trust Fund, UNIFEM supports regional and national initiatives focused on advocacy and awareness-raising, legislative reform, training of officials involved in the administration of justice, and increasing men's participation in combating violence against women. In South Asia, a regional programme to confront trafficking in women and children, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is entering its fourth and final year. Focused on prevention, protection and prosecution it employs a regional approach (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) to link Governments and NGOs from sending and receiving countries; focuses on issues of supply and demand; and uses a rights framework to protect the rights of trafficked women and girls. Results have included a vastly expanded information base and high-level commitment, as well as four new networks — the South Asia Forum against Human Trafficking (NGOs and advocates), South Asia Professionals against Trafficking (law enforcement officials, lawyers and health professionals), the Technical Advisory Group in South Asia (a high-level think tank) and the Inter-Faith Committee of Religious Leaders to Address Trafficking and Gender Inequality (Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim clerics). Around the Indo-Nepalese border, cross-border committees and a network of 50 NGOs have been established and are coordinating closely with district administration representatives and law enforcement personnel. In Morocco, following a research and advocacy campaign, UNIFEM joined with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNDP and other partners to support the development of a national strategy to combat gender-based violence. The result was the introduction of new measures into the country's penal code and labour law regarding such matters as forced prostitution, sexual harassment, honour killings, domestic violence and rape.

3. Increased awareness and action in response to the gender and human rights dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

38. UNIFEM efforts on HIV/AIDS contribute to the United Nations system's coordinated response to the pandemic. Key results in 2003 include: strengthened support to positive women's networks to influence policy choices; increased capacity of policy-making institutions to recognize and formulate gender-sensitive responses; and achieving a stronger response within the United Nations system on the gender and human rights dimensions of the pandemic.

39. Networks have been supported in India, Kenya, Senegal and Zimbabwe to enhance leadership and capacities on legal rights, enable HIV-positive women to

negotiate with their Governments to engender policies and treatment, address stigma and discrimination with the media, and ensure the greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS. In India, the Fund worked with the Positive Women's Network and the Centre for Advocacy and Research to document human rights violations committed against women living with HIV/AIDS and develop a media tool on gender-sensitive reporting. In Senegal, assistance to women living with HIV/AIDS to form their own association enabled HIV-positive women to leverage support from different sectors, and members of the association have been recruited to work in government ministries.

40. Training of national AIDS councils and senior policy makers to engender their national AIDS policies has been undertaken in East Africa and southern Africa. Collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat on a regional workshop for policy makers in Tanzania in March 2003 resulted in the Arusha Commitments on Gender and HIV and AIDS: from Policy to Practice in East Africa and contributed to stronger collaboration among the national AIDS councils of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Efforts in East Africa also have benefited from UNIFEM and USAID support to the IGAD Women's Desk, which provided training of trainers for 42 ministry officials, national HIV/AIDS secretariats, NGOs and international agencies on the gender dimensions of the epidemic, as well as mediation and negotiation skills. At the IGAD 10th Summit, in October 2003, member States reaffirmed their commitment to addressing issues of gender and HIV/AIDS. Policy and legislative reviews have been undertaken in Brazil, Honduras, Kenya, Senegal and Zimbabwe, and advocated for in Eritrea, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, the Sudan, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. UNIFEM work to mainstream gender into HIV/AIDS policies in India — supported by UNFPA, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security — has yielded significant results. Its collaboration with the Indian Railways, a public sector entity that employs 1.5 million people, has built awareness and commitment among railway policy makers on gender and HIV/AIDS. The Railway Women's Association now provides support services for women living with HIV/AIDS and free treatment is available through the Railways health system.

41. UNAIDS spearheaded the creation of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, in which UNIFEM is the lead agency on the gender dimensions of care work. UNIFEM is also collaborating closely with the World Health Organization (WHO), lead agency for highlighting the links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS. With UNAIDS funding, the UNIFEM Gender and HIV/AIDS web portal (www.genderandaids.org) was launched in February 2003 to promote the exchange of information, raise awareness, build knowledge, support advocacy and give visibility to innovative initiatives. The site has already received over 300,000 hits and continues to grow as a unique electronic resource on the gender dimensions of the pandemic.

E. Enhancing the capacity of the United Nations system to support the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes

42. UNIFEM support to gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system takes place within the context of the Secretary-General's Reform Agenda, which calls for

increased collaboration, harmonization and simplification among United Nations agencies. In 2003, UNIFEM efforts towards this goal have contributed to the following two results.

1. Increased attention to gender equality in coordination mechanisms

43. Through its field-based work and at headquarters, UNIFEM places a high priority on bringing a gender perspective to coordination mechanisms. Key entry points have been the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) processes, work on the Millennium Development Goals and increased engagement with poverty reduction strategy processes on the ground. Increasing efforts are also now being made to incorporate a gender perspective in work on post-conflict transition and humanitarian assistance, including United Nations integrated missions to conflict-affected areas and Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAPs).

44. UNIFEM continues to be strategically and selectively involved in CCA/UNDAF processes at the country level and at headquarters. Field-level activities have included a review of the gender dimensions of six CCA/UNDAFs in the Pacific, the provision of technical expertise on gender to the CCA/UNDAF process in Burundi, taking the lead for the CCA section on gender equality in Zimbabwe, and input into CCA/UNDAF processes in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco. In Rwanda, UNIFEM worked closely with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to secure the inclusion of gender and human rights perspectives in the CCA/UNDAF processes. In Kazakhstan, as Chair of the United Nations Thematic Group on Gender, UNIFEM regularly convened United Nations partners to review CCA/UNDAF drafts for gender content. The Fund provided technical support to the development of the CCA outline and secured three outcomes in the country's UNDAF results framework that encompass gender equality concerns.

45. In 2003, the United Nations system greatly stepped up its work on the Millennium Development Goals, with UNIFEM providing input at all levels. UNIFEM is strengthening the gender dimensions of United Nations country team efforts to engage in local-level monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction strategy papers as a pilot UNDAF initiative in Bondo District in Kenya, and provided input into Millennium Development Goal reports in Egypt, the occupied Palestinian territories, Russia and Zimbabwe. UNIFEM also contributed to building field-level knowledge on incorporating a gender perspective in Millennium Development Goal monitoring processes through leading and participating in inter-agency efforts to develop the gender indicators that are being used in Kazakhstan and Senegal. In Cambodia, UNIFEM executed a UNDP programme to build capacity to incorporate a gender perspective in the country's Millennium Development Goal report. The Fund worked with the United Nations, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and government partners. As a result of this collaboration, UNIFEM proposed an expanded set of gender-sensitive indicators tailored to the national context. UNIFEM work on the ground is contributing to enhanced coordination and knowledge on gender and Millennium Development Goals at the global level. In August 2003, UNIFEM launched a web portal (www.mdgender.net) as a one-stop repository for resources on gender and the Millennium Development Goals. UNIFEM also coordinated a five-week electronic discussion that involved more than 400 participants, representing United Nations agencies, bilateral donors, multilateral development banks and civil society

organizations, in debating what the Millennium Development Goals mean for gender equality and women's rights advocacy. The discussion fed into the agenda of the World Bank-UNDP Workshop on Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals in November 2003. Also, in late 2003, UNIFEM began executing a project on behalf of UNDP that will build the advocacy and capacity of United Nations country teams and national partners in five countries (Peru, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Kenya and Cambodia) to engender the Millennium Development Goals.

46. UNIFEM is an active member of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality task force on women, peace and security, which brings together gender equality expertise from numerous United Nations agencies and NGOs to influence United Nations processes. Working with and through all of these groups, UNIFEM has contributed to stronger attention to gender equality concerns in the coordinated efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Liberia, the Sudan and Rwanda.

2. Stronger collaboration with strategic United Nations partner organizations

47. Many of the partnerships of UNIFEM with United Nations organizations take place in inter-agency groups. UNIFEM chairs 10 inter-agency thematic groups on gender in the field — and one in New York — and co-chairs five more. Additionally, UNIFEM participates in the inter-agency thematic group on HIV/AIDS in almost every country in which it has a presence, and is increasingly active in theme groups on human rights, poverty and democratization.

48. UNIFEM partnerships with UNDP, UNFPA and UNAIDS remained the strongest in 2003. A more strategic partnership with UNDP continues to grow, with strong support from the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNIFEM. Concrete partnerships made possible through UNIFEM execution of UNDP projects are increasing; UNIFEM executed 19 initiatives for UNDP in 2003. The multi-year funding frameworks developed by both organizations in 2003 demonstrate clear areas of synergy, highlighting shared goals related to reducing poverty, crisis prevention and recovery, HIV/AIDS and democratic governance. A joint conference room paper on "Strengthening the partnership between UNDP and UNIFEM to achieve gender equality" (DP/2004/CRP.2) submitted to the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA at its first regular session 2004 further describes the strategy going forward.

49. UNIFEM collaboration with UNFPA involves execution of projects, co-management of inter-agency mechanisms related to HIV/AIDS, partnerships in advocacy strategies and co-production of resource materials on gender equality. In addition to headquarters-based collaboration with the World Bank on gender and the Millennium Development Goals, partnerships are also developing around gender budgeting in Morocco, incorporating a gender perspective in macroeconomic planning in Nigeria, bringing a gender perspective to poverty reduction strategy papers in South-East Asia, gender perspectives on land rights in the Commonwealth of Independent States, and contributing to the World Bank country programme in Jordan. UNIFEM has developed memorandums of understanding with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in South Asia and West Africa to introduce a gender perspective to the work of IFAD with rural communities living in poverty. Also in South Asia, UNIFEM is reinvigorating its work on gender and trade through a partnership with the United Nations Conference

on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). UNIFEM has close working partnerships with all of the United Nations regional commissions, particularly on engendering data and statistics. Finally, the UNIFEM working relationships with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat have strengthened as its work on the gender dimensions of crisis prevention, protection and recovery has deepened.

F. Strengthening the Fund's effectiveness by incorporating the principles of a learning organization and building strategic partnerships

50. Fostering learning and knowledge on the "how-to" of achieving gender equality and women's human rights are fundamental to fulfilling the UNIFEM mandate to be innovative and catalytic. Incorporating the principles of a learning organization requires that UNIFEM develop internal systems and external partnerships that facilitate knowledge generation and dissemination, as well as accessible and relevant knowledge products. Building on previous years, key results in 2003 included:

1. Refinement of knowledge "products" to capture and make accessible learning in key thematic areas

51. UNIFEM continued to refine its ability to capture and disseminate knowledge. It focused on flagship publications as the basis for advocacy; electronic portals as one-stop information shops on UNIFEM thematic areas; and standardizing media practices and products.

52. The biennial UNIFEM report, *Progress of the World's Women 2002* was published in two volumes: Volume 1: *Women, War, Peace*; and Volume 2: *Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*. UNIFEM invested in multiple launches for Volume 1 in 2003, including in South Africa, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Thailand and Timor-Leste, as well as Australia, Belgium and Switzerland, in partnership either with Governments or with United Nations partners, as well as women's organizations. For Volume 2, advocacy was focused more on the multilateral and bilateral system, linked to UNIFEM work on www.MDGender.net, electronic discussions on gender and the Millennium Development Goals, and its execution of a five-country project for UNDP. Inaugurated in 2000, the UNIFEM biennial report *Progress of the World's Women* continues to stimulate replications at the country level. A national version for Brazil is expected in 2004.

53. In addition to its web site and intranet, the number of UNIFEM information hubs selectively expanded and improved in 2003. Web portals are now functioning on Women, War and Peace (www.womenwarpeace.org); the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS (www.genderandaids.org); gender and the Millennium Development Goals (www.mdgender.net); and economic governance (www.unifem-ecogov-apas.org); making Arab-language information on gender equality widely available (www.arabwomenconnect.org); and the web portal on gender budgeting (www.gender-budgets.org), which has recently been revamped.

54. For the second year, the event "Not a minute more" was held in New York on 24 November, with UNIFEM taking the lead in highlighting the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in the United Nations system. The event regularly provides an opportunity for Trust Fund grant recipients to share their strategies for working to end violence in their communities, and to underline the critical role of global partnerships between Governments, the United Nations system, women's networks, civil society and the private sector in addressing the issue.

2. Strengthened systems and capacity to support innovation and learning

55. UNIFEM undertook three thematic assessments of cross-regional programming and 10 project evaluations in 2003. Thematic assessments were completed on gender-responsive budget initiatives, HIV/AIDS, and peace and security. Among the 10 project evaluations, three were for projects related to women's livelihoods and others were for projects on governance/women's political participation and ending violence against women. There is increased effort throughout UNIFEM to learn from its experiences and those of partners and to share knowledge within and outside of the Fund. Strengthening the internal electronic networking capacity of the Fund has been essential. UNIFEM continued to facilitate selective electronic working groups with partners, such as those on the Millennium Development Goals and gender. One of the most intensive examples of organizational learning was provided through the establishment of a small community of practice for gender budgets that included UNIFEM staff and implementing partners. The community of practice provided a forum for collective discussions on the process and findings of the UNIFEM cross-regional evaluation and is growing into a key source of instant feedback, advice and strategies for programme partners.

III. Financial management

56. In 2003, UNIFEM resources totalled \$34 million: \$21.7 million in core resources and \$12.3 million in non-core resources. A total of 38 Member States contributed to core resources of the Fund in 2003 with the Government of Costa Rica contributing for the first time. In this period, approximately 88 per cent of total resources have come from bilateral donors and 35 per cent have been received as cost-sharing contributions. This speaks to two key elements of UNIFEM strategy for future resource mobilization efforts: (a) further building the confidence of bilateral donors, including through multi-year commitments, improved and timely reporting and more opportunities for joint learning and assessments; a particular emphasis is on the goal that core resources represent at least 80 per cent of total resources; (b) diversifying sources of funds, including through project execution for other organizations and programme countries, and private-sector partnerships.

57. Partnerships with bilateral donors, programme countries and United Nations organizations to increase funds leveraged for gender equality continued to be strengthened in relation to core funds and cost-sharing projects. With regard to core funds, the UNIFEM partnership with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) — based on a jointly designed institutional strategy paper, regular monitoring and multi-year pledges — provides a model that is in line with the Fund's commitment to results-based and more reliable planning. In 2003, UNIFEM and DfID completed the final draft of an Institutional Strategy

2004-2007, based on the UNIFEM multi-year funding framework 2004-2007. In its dialogue with bilateral donors UNIFEM stresses the value of such an approach, although to date no other similar agreement has been developed.

58. UNIFEM continues to leverage increased funds for gender equality programming through project execution for other United Nations organizations. It executes the largest number of these programmes for UNDP — a total of 19 projects in 15 countries valued at \$1.2 million. Project execution for UNFPA continued in 2003 as well. In all cases, UNIFEM executes projects only in its areas of comparative advantage, in line with the goals embodied in its multi-year funding framework, and where national execution is not yet possible.

59. Building partnerships with socially responsible private-sector entities is an opportunity and challenge that UNIFEM continues to explore. These entities include private philanthropic foundations, as well as corporate entities and individuals from the private sector. Contributions in 2003 amounted to \$2.27 million. In addition various in-kind contributions were also made, such as the donation of 25 computers to support the UNIFEM Afghan country programme's effort to establish an Afghan women's business centre in Kabul to train women entrepreneurs and connect them with the international market; and the support of PeaceKeeper — a New York-based company that donates after-cost profits to organizations that promote women's human rights — to the UNIFEM 25 November programme at the United Nations to raise awareness of strategies to reduce gender-based violence.

60. The first phase of a strategy to increase the capacities of the UNIFEM national committees culminated in 2003. With funding from the Government of Switzerland, UNIFEM and a task force of representatives of various national committees revised the recognition agreement to incorporate a stronger focus on fund-raising and the media and a minimum target for each committee of \$50,000 annually. Currently, 15 committees have signed the agreement. UNIFEM facilitated in-person and electronic consultations to help its 15 committees improve their infrastructure and planning processes. As a result, there has been a notable increase in national committee activity, although actual increases in funds raised will require a longer time.

IV. Recommendations

61. The UNIFEM Consultative Committee, which is comprised of five Member States (Canada, Jordan, Mexico, Niger and Slovenia) appointed by the President of the General Assembly, provides key recommendations to the organization each year. At its forty-fourth session, the Committee made the following recommendation:

Programming effectiveness

1. The Consultative Committee encourages UNIFEM to continue to utilize the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a basis for programming.
2. The Consultative Committee encourages UNIFEM to continue to strengthen its work in tracking progress on the gender dimensions of the Millennium Development Goals in close collaboration with UNDP and encourages the Administrator to involve UNIFEM in the areas of its

comparative advantage. This involves both campaigning work and unlocking expertise at country level, through the regional coordinator system. Also, the Consultative Committee encourages UNIFEM to collaborate with all parts of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, regional organizations, and civil society to facilitate the integration of gender analysis in the poverty reduction strategy paper processes as well as in the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

3. Recognizing the contribution of UNIFEM to the ongoing United Nations reform effort, the Consultative Committee recommends that UNIFEM continue to be involved in all such processes, including those at the regional level, and to keep the Consultative Committee apprised of developments in this regard.

4. The Consultative Committee supports the ongoing efforts of UNIFEM in its deliberations with other agencies and organizations to further discuss the substance, strategies and resource implications of taking a wide interpretation of violence against women and how it might affect guidelines and operation of the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

5. The Consultative Committee encourages UNIFEM to continue its work on peace and security by finalizing the framework for collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, through the conclusion of memorandums of understanding, in order to devise a joint strategy for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Organizational effectiveness

6. The Consultative Committee fully supports the UNIFEM multi-year funding framework 2004-2007 and encourages all Member States to contribute to UNIFEM. Current and potential donors are encouraged to devote a greater share of their contributions to the regular resources of UNIFEM and make commitments to multi-year funding. The Consultative Committee encourages UNIFEM to reach out to all Member States in this respect.

7. The Consultative Committee supports UNIFEM's ongoing discussion with UNDP on strengthening cooperation to improve organizational effectiveness and requests that it remain updated as to the outcomes of this discussion. In particular, the Consultative Committee looks forward to the finalization of the cooperation framework and unit service agreements, including on human resources.

8. The Consultative Committee urges UNIFEM to further explore the possibilities of mobilizing resources through building strategic partnerships and to continue to explore the possibilities of private sector funding.

9. The Consultative Committee requests UNIFEM to provide to it at its next meeting a table listing the benefits derived by Member States from

UNIFEM activities as well as contributions made to UNIFEM from 1995 onward.

10. The Consultative Committee endorses the distribution of the resources of UNIFEM as proposed in its current finance report.

In conclusion

11. The Consultative Committee requests that UNIFEM report to it along the lines of the multi-year funding framework 2004-2007, tracking progress according to the key results and indicators. The Consultative Committee will review this at its next annual meeting to see if it has sufficient information on which to base its decisions.

12. The Consultative Committee recommends that it convene another meeting at the start of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly to discuss the appropriate committee for consideration of the UNIFEM resolution and other issues outstanding.

13. The Consultative Committee recalled that since the establishment of UNIFEM in 1984 as a separate and identifiable entity in autonomous association with UNDP, the role of the Fund has been expanded by the General Assembly, noting in this regard, (i) the Beijing Platform for Action, which called upon UNIFEM to strengthen its role in the promotion of the political and economic empowerment of women; (ii) the work undertaken by the Fund to implement the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"; (iii) the activities undertaken by the Fund in follow-up to General Assembly resolution 54/136, including those to strengthen the capacities of women in situations of armed conflict and the role of women in peace-building; (iv) the Fund's actions to support and track progress in implementing commitments to gender equality and women's human rights in the context of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals; and (v) the role played by UNIFEM to support the goals of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In addition, the Consultative Committee noted that the human and financial resource base of UNIFEM has not expanded to an extent commensurate with this enlarged role and falls short of its ability to respond to the increasing demands received for its assistance. Further, the Consultative Committee concluded that, although the current structure of UNIFEM is predominantly based on a regional presence with limited headquarters support, the Fund's delivery of assistance has been most effective when it has had a presence — however modest — at the country level. In view of these factors, the Consultative Committee considered that the effectiveness and potential of UNIFEM was constrained by, inter alia, its limited country presence worldwide, its modest headquarters support structure and its inadequate resource base. Therefore, the Consultative Committee recommends that UNIFEM, in coordination with the Consultative Committee, commission an independent assessment of the Fund's current status, role and structure in the United Nations system

in order to consider what changes may be necessary to maximize its impact — within the context of a longer-term strategic vision — in the interest of promoting gender equality and women's political and economic empowerment.



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Items 67 (p), (q), (t) and (x) of the preliminary list*

General and complete disarmament

Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*

Reducing nuclear danger

Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda

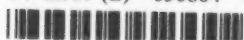
Nuclear disarmament

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/59/50 and Corr.1.



I. Introduction

1. This report is submitted pursuant to requests contained in the following resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on 8 December 2003: 58/46, "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*"; 58/47, "Reducing nuclear danger"; 58/51, "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda"; 58/56, "Nuclear disarmament".

2. In paragraph 3 of resolution 58/46, the General Assembly requested all States to inform the Secretary-General of the efforts and measures they had taken on the implementation of the resolution and nuclear disarmament, and requested the Secretary-General to apprise the General Assembly of that information at its fifty-ninth session.

3. In paragraph 5 of resolution 58/47, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to intensify efforts and support initiatives that would contribute towards the full implementation of the seven recommendations identified in the report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (A/56/400) that would significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, and also to continue to encourage Member States to endeavour to create conditions that would allow the emergence of an international consensus in favour of holding an international conference, as proposed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

4. In paragraph 29 of resolution 58/51, the General Assembly acknowledged the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 57/59, and requested him to prepare a report, within existing resources, on the implementation of the resolution.

5. In paragraph 21 of resolution 58/56, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

II. Observations

6. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain priority issues for international peace and security. The international community continues to confront dangers from the acquisition, possession and possible use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Reducing such threats necessarily requires efforts at all levels, i.e., the unilateral, bilateral and multilateral levels. Unilateral measures to reduce existing nuclear arsenals by the nuclear-weapon States are essential and some progress has been made in this respect. Steady implementation of the Moscow Treaty by the Russian Federation and the United States of America would contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security. At the same time, it is important that the international community continue its efforts to strengthen existing arms control and disarmament agreements by achieving universal adherence to, full compliance with, and effective implementation of their provisions.

7. Multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regimes need to be upheld by their membership in order to be effective and fully discharge their functions. The third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was held from 26 April to 7 May 2004 in New York. The Treaty remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The Treaty basically rests on three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful nuclear cooperation. The Treaty has recently been challenged by questions of compliance and withdrawal and the basic question of credible progress towards nuclear disarmament remains. The Preparatory Committee was unable to agree on a number of issues essential for the preparation of the Review Conference in 2005. It is important for the success of the Conference that States Parties to the Treaty strive to resolve the remaining issues in the months leading to the Review Conference. A successful outcome at the Review Conference will be critical in maintaining the validity of the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.
8. Despite the increase in the number of ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty since my last report, the Treaty still lacks the ratifications required for its entry into force. The Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty, the third of its kind, was held from 3 to 5 September 2003 in Vienna. The Conference adopted a Final Declaration stressing the importance of the Treaty and its entry into force as a practical step for the systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. The Final Declaration also contains 12 measures to promote the entry into force of the Treaty. The Secretary-General reiterates his call on the States which have not yet done so, especially those States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty, to sign and ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible date. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, it is essential that the moratoria on nuclear-weapon-test explosions and other nuclear explosions be maintained.
9. The Conference on Disarmament has yet to break the impasse in its proceeding in order to resume substantive work. It is critical that the Conference succeed in resuming its substantive work, particularly at a time when the validity of the multilateral disarmament machinery has been called into question. The Secretary-General encourages the States members of the Conference to overcome the differences in their views and positions with regard to priorities for disarmament negotiations and to agree on a substantive programme of work without further delay.
10. Full implementation of the seven recommendations identified in the report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (A/56/400) for reducing nuclear dangers requires further efforts. In response to the request contained in General Assembly resolution 58/47, the Secretary-General continues to support initiatives and actions taken to this effect. With regard to the proposal contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration for convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, consultations with Member States demonstrate that the conditions that would allow the emergence of an international consensus to hold such a conference have yet to be created.
11. The threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and related materials, as recently attested by the discovery of clandestine markets for nuclear technology, and the possibility that such weapons and materials may fall into the hands of terrorists, have added to the challenges faced by

multilateral disarmament efforts. The United Nations is fully committed to assisting Member States in meeting these challenges.

III. Information received from Governments

12. As regards resolution 58/46, entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", all Member States were invited, via a note verbale dated 27 February 2004, to inform the Secretary-General of the efforts and measures they had taken with regard to the implementation of the resolution. To date, replies have been received from China, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela, the texts of which are reproduced below. Any additional replies received from Member States will be issued as addenda to the present report.

China

[Original: Chinese/English]

[3 April 2004]

13. China believes that the goal of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons should be achieved through the conclusion of an international legal instrument. China supports General Assembly resolution 58/46 and is willing to report on the efforts and measures taken by the Chinese Government, according to the request made in the resolution, in implementing the resolution and promoting the process of nuclear disarmament as follows.

14. As a nuclear-weapon State, China has never shunned its responsibilities in nuclear disarmament. China has unilaterally taken some important measures, thus making contributions to international nuclear disarmament and promoting the process of international nuclear disarmament.

15. China believes that since non-nuclear-weapon States have given up their nuclear weapon options, it is fully legitimate and reasonable for them to claim assurances against nuclear weapons threats and have such assurances affirmed in a legally binding form. Ever since the first day it came into possession of nuclear weapons, China has undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances. China has also pledged unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. In April 1995, in an official statement, China reiterated its position on unconditionally providing negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States and undertook to provide positive security assurances to these States. China has consistently urged all nuclear-weapon States to enshrine the above-mentioned commitments in a legal form. China has signed and ratified all relevant protocols to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties that are open to signature and undertaken corresponding obligations. China and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have reached an agreement on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and its Protocol. China has no difficulty with the protocol to the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty that is under negotiation.

16. China's development of a limited nuclear force is purely for the purpose of self-defence. Therefore, China has exercised utmost restraint in developing nuclear weapons, and maintained a minimum arsenal necessary for self-defence only. Among the nuclear-weapon States, China has performed the least number of nuclear tests. China opposes the policy of nuclear deterrence based upon the first use of nuclear weapons. China has never taken part and will not take part in any nuclear arms race, nor has it deployed a single piece of nuclear weapon outside its territory. China closed down the nuclear weapon research and development site in Qinghai Province, and after an environmental clean-up, the site was returned to the local government for civilian use in May 1995.

17. China actively participated in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and was among the first to sign the Treaty in September 1996. In 1999, the Chinese Government completed its review of the Treaty and submitted it to the National People's Congress. The Chinese Government is actively promoting an early ratification of the Treaty by the National People's Congress. China honours its commitment to a moratorium on nuclear test explosions and is taking an active and constructive part in all the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, earnestly preparing for the national implementation of the Treaty. China actively participates in the Review Process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and supports the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to start substantive work and negotiations on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible.

18. In order to advance the nuclear disarmament process, China submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session a proposal for a comprehensive and interlinked nuclear disarmament process, which called on the nuclear-weapon States, inter alia, to negotiate immediately and sign a treaty on mutual non-first-use of nuclear weapons; to undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones; to conclude and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; to negotiate and conclude the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty; and to negotiate, conclude and sign a convention on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons. Over the years, China has cast favourable votes on the following resolutions at the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations: "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", "Nuclear disarmament", "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", and "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons".

19. China hopes that the above-mentioned measures will be conducive to the goal of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[21 May 2004]

20. Although almost eight years have gone by since the issuance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, there have still not been any serious steps taken to achieve nuclear disarmament.

21. The advisory opinion makes it clear that the nuclear-weapon States have a legal obligation not just to pursue but also to conclude in good faith negotiations aimed at achieving complete nuclear disarmament under a strict and effective system of international control.
22. The lack of progress on key substantive issues within the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a clear demonstration of the lack of genuine political will on the part of some nuclear Powers to fulfil their commitments and obligations in the area of nuclear disarmament.
23. In line with the view expressed by all States Members of the United Nations in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, Cuba considers nuclear disarmament to be the top disarmament priority.
24. Paragraph 50 of the Final Document remains fully relevant, in that it draws attention to the need for the urgent negotiation of agreements leading to: cessation of the qualitative improvement and development of nuclear-weapon systems; cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, and of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes; and a comprehensive, phased programme with agreed time frames, whenever feasible, for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their ultimate and complete elimination at the earliest possible time.
25. Cuba regrets that the Conference on Disarmament remains unable to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate on the issue of nuclear disarmament. It believes that this committee should be established as a matter of priority, with a mandate to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame and under strict international control.
26. Nuclear disarmament is a universal responsibility. Non-nuclear-weapon States, including Cuba, are also threatened by nuclear weapons, because of their destructive potential and the scale of any military confrontation in which they might be used.
27. The non-nuclear-weapon States must abide by their commitment not to possess nuclear weapons of any kind. However, the nuclear-weapon States must also play their part, one of the fundamental components of which is nuclear disarmament. Until they eliminate nuclear weapons, they are not complying fully with the commitments they entered into under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
28. Eliminating the role of nuclear weapons as part of security policies would be one of the first steps to take to facilitate the process of elimination of these weapons.
29. The Havana Declaration, adopted by all the States of Latin America and the Caribbean on the occasion of the XVIII regular session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), held in Cuba in November 2003, expresses the region's concern about the existence of new approaches, in which a wider role is given to nuclear weapons as part of security strategies.

30. Until universal nuclear disarmament is achieved, it is essential to establish effective, legally binding measures and arrangements to guarantee the security of non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

31. Some nuclear Powers have put forward the view that in the area of security guarantees, Security Council resolution 984 (1995) is sufficient, along with the guarantees derived from the additional protocols to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

32. Cuba does not support this position. The unilateral declarations made by the nuclear Powers in April 1995 are clearly insufficient, especially in the light of various events which have occurred since then. What kind of security guarantees can be discussed when the global super-Power is lowering, instead of raising, the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons? There can be no guarantees while we are all witnessing the adoption of new doctrines which openly envisage the possibility of using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

33. As to the guarantees given under the additional protocols to the treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones, the experience of the Treaty of Tlatelolco clearly demonstrates that they are not sufficient.

34. Since it is impossible to make reservations to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which does not allow them, some nuclear Powers have resorted to the subterfuge of formulating interpretative declarations when signing or ratifying the additional protocols to the Treaty. Several of these declarations are clearly contrary to the denuclearization regime envisaged in the Treaty.

35. Some nuclear Powers have even used such interpretative declarations to reserve for themselves the possibility of using nuclear weapons on grounds which, in their view, constitute legitimate self-defence. Others are making unacceptable interpretations of the denuclearization regime of the Treaty.

36. For these reasons, Cuba fully supports the common position adopted by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the need to strengthen the integrity of the denuclearization regime envisaged in the Treaty of Tlatelolco through a request for a review of the declarations made by the nuclear Powers which are parties to Protocols I and II with a view to their eventual withdrawal or amendment.

Guatemala

[Original: Spanish]

[8 June 2004]

37. In relation to General Assembly resolution 58/46, and in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Guatemala has signed and ratified:

- (a) Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft;
- (b) Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft;
- (c) Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation;

(d) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents;

(e) Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material;

(f) Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation;

(g) Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction;

(h) Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection;

(i) International Convention against the Taking of Hostages;

(j) International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings;

(k) International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism;

(l) Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof; and

(m) Convention of the Organization of American States to Prevent and Punish the Acts of Terrorism Taking the Form of Crimes Against Persons and Related Extortion that are of International Significance.

38. Guatemala has enacted the following legislation:

(a) Decree 70-2001. Establishes the post of an inter-agency security coordinator within the State, responsible for drawing up policies and strategies and promoting coordination and national, regional and international initiatives for the prevention of terrorist threats;

(b) Legislative decree 67-2001. Act Against the Laundering of Money or Other Assets, under article 12 of which, in case of *periculum in mora*, the Office of the Public Prosecutor may order the confiscation, seizure or freezing of property, documents and bank accounts;

(c) Legislative decree 95-98. Immigration Act, regulates expulsion to their countries of origin of aliens who violate domestic law by committing an offence during their stay, where their stay is contrary to the national interest as determined by the Department for Immigration;

(d) Decree law 17-73, Penal Code, establishes penalties of prison sentences ranging from six months to 15 years and additional financial penalties, and defines the offences of interference, hostile acts, and offences of international scope, among others;

(e) Legislative decree 39-89 has been promulgated, concerning the Department of Arms and Munitions Control (DECAM). Article 95, establishes that the illegal possession of offensive firearms, explosives, chemical, biological and atomic weapons, mines and experimental weapons is a punishable offence;

(f) Decree law 123-85, Restricted Items Act, stipulates in article 1 that for the purposes of this act, chlorates, nitrates, explosives, cartridges, percussion caps, ammunition, powder and other materials that may be used for the manufacture of explosive articles, except where authorized by the Ministry of Defence, are regarded as restricted items;

(g) By decree No. 14-2001, the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction;

(h) In the third report (S/2003/355) submitted to the United Nations by the Government of Guatemala on 17 March 2003 in response to the letter dated 16 December 2002 (S/AC.40/2002/MS/OC.205), pursuant to paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). In relation to paragraphs 2 (b) and 3 (a) and (b) of that resolution, the Ministry of Defence established in March 2003 a counter-terrorism department, which conducts intelligence in order to warn the legally constituted civil authorities about terrorism and related activities, in accordance with article 244 of the Constitution of the Republic and decree 40-2000;

(i) International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Establishes measures for the control, identification, detection, freezing and forfeiture of funds and other financial assets; and

(j) Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation: from 19 October 1978. Pursuant to article 8 of this Convention, the specified offences shall be deemed to be included as extraditable offences in any extradition treaty existing between Contracting States. The same provision covers cases of extradition.

39. The efforts and interest of States Members of the United Nations in contributing to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (nuclear weapons) is gratifying, and is clearly a response to the insecurity and uncertainty associated with the existence of this type of weapon in the world.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[13 May 2004]

40. Mexico's position as a country which actively promotes nuclear disarmament is well known in the international community. Mexico fully supports General Assembly resolution 58/46, of 8 December 2003, particularly the reference to the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice that there is an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

41. Mexico supports the appeal made in paragraph 2 of resolution 58/46 and calls upon all States immediately to fulfil that obligation by commencing multilateral, transparent and non-discriminatory negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their complete and irreversible elimination.

42. As to initiatives to achieve nuclear disarmament, Mexico continues to support the efforts to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament succeeds in adopting a programme of work which includes the establishment of a subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with issues relating to nuclear disarmament. Mexico maintains its position that any programme of work which fails to include this issue of such interest to members of the international community would be unacceptable.

43. Both in an individual capacity and within the New Agenda Coalition (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden), Mexico is continuing to promote nuclear disarmament in all relevant forums in which it participates, and in its bilateral meetings, placing particular emphasis on the need to apply the principles of irreversibility, transparency and verification.

44. At the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the New Agenda Coalition countries issued a Declaration in which they expressed deep concern at the lack of progress to date in the implementation of the 13 steps on nuclear disarmament to which all the States Parties had agreed at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

45. The Ministers stressed that each article of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is binding on the States Parties, at all times and in all circumstances, and that all States Parties must be held fully accountable with respect to strict compliance with their obligations under the Treaty, and reiterated that the fulfilment of the commitments assumed under the Treaty continues to be essential.

46. The Declaration also stresses that the recent international debate on weapons of mass destruction has highlighted that the sole guarantee against the use of any weapon of mass destruction anywhere, including nuclear weapons, is their total elimination and the assurance that they will never be used or produced again. The Ministers also reiterated their deep concern at emerging approaches to the broader role of nuclear weapons as part of security strategies, including rationalizations for the use of and the development of new types of nuclear weapons.

47. The Ministers also underlined the significance of the current review process of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to assess progress in implementation and to consider actions needed on nuclear disarmament, stressing the importance that the Third Preparatory Committee should submit substantive recommendations regarding nuclear disarmament, as well as on the matter of security assurances, to the Review Conference.

48. At the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the New Agenda countries again submitted two resolutions to the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) designed to promote the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

49. Thus, paragraph 26 of resolution 58/51, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: a new agenda" calls upon the Russian Federation and the United States of America to approach the International Atomic Energy Agency to carry out the verification requirements set forth in the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement signed by the two States on the basis of the model legal framework that has been agreed on and that is now available to be used in new verification agreements between the Agency and each of the two States.

50. Resolution 58/50, entitled "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons", once again calls upon the Russian Federation and the United States of America to formalize their presidential nuclear initiatives into legal instruments and to initiate negotiations on further reductions of such weapons. It also provides that reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons should be carried out in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner; calls for the adoption of measures to reduce further the operational status of these weapons; and stresses the need for an undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States that possess such weapons not to increase the number of types of weapons deployed and not to develop new types of these weapons or rationalizations for their use. Mexico stresses that reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons are an integral part of the process of reduction of nuclear weapons and disarmament.

51. Furthermore, during the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference, Mexico, along with the New Agenda countries, submitted a document containing substantive recommendations to be submitted to the Review Conference.

52. This document, *inter alia*, includes recommendations to call on all States to refrain from any action that could lead to a new nuclear arms race or that could impact negatively on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, call upon the nuclear-weapon States to implement the commitments made in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as in other agreements or initiatives in this area; recall the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament and to agree that the nuclear-weapon States should diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies, reduce the number of nuclear weapons deployed, and not develop new types of nuclear weapons or rationalizations for their use.

53. The advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 8 July 1996 observes that the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons, and in particular their destructive capacity, their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come, render them potentially catastrophic. According to the Court, the destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time. They have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet.

54. The emergence of new ideologies and the issuance of numerous threats to use these weapons in the shadow of a tense international climate highlight the need to eliminate these weapons, and demand the adoption, for the purpose of bringing this about, of a legally binding international instrument on negative security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States.

55. The Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with the principles governing its policy of enhancing international peace and security and with the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and as part of its overall perspective on general and complete disarmament, has spared no effort in supporting United Nations resolutions relating to disarmament. It became a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968) and agreed to be bound by its safeguards regime. On 29 December 2003, the Syrian Arab Republic called on the Security Council to hold consultations on a serious and constructive initiative, submitted to the Security Council on behalf of the Arab Group, to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, based on its conviction that possession of these

destructive weapons by any State in the Middle East or the world constitutes a threat to the region and is to be considered a source of grave concern to the peoples of the region and the world. The Syrian Arab Republic believes that it is urgent that through this initiative there be established a mechanism related to the concerns of the region and the world about security and international peace, and calls through it for pressure on Israel, the one State in the region that does possess an enormous arsenal of these weapons and threatens its neighbours, to comply with the resolutions of the international community.

56. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms General Assembly resolution 58/46, entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", and calls for the adoption of practical measures for the elaboration of a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame and under effective international control.

Venezuela

[Original: Spanish]
[18 May 2004]

57. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that a world that supports the principle of nuclear weapons security is, paradoxically, a world subject to the threat of its destruction, and is of the view that strengthening the multilateral regime of the United Nations in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is an appropriate route to advance towards a true global commitment to peace and security.

58. Venezuela is a party to the nuclear-weapon-free zone established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and is therefore opposed to any initiative for the manufacture, development and trafficking of such weapons.

59. As a contribution to nuclear non-proliferation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has indicated to the International Atomic Energy Agency its full support for the efforts being made by the Agency to increase the technological and physical security of radioactive sources through recognition of the principles and norms of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

60. The negotiations on the draft agreement to be signed between the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the conduct of activities related to facilities of the Treaty's international monitoring system, including activities subsequent to registration.